



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

# Diversity of Religions in the Eyes of Ayatollah ‘Abdullah Javadi and Professor Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub

Author: Saeid Eghbal Sobhani

Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies Doctorate  
The University of Edinburgh – 2019

**Abstract:** The question of religions diversity and the related issues of validity, truth and salvation can have a great practical impact on our life in the modern closely-knit global society and can help improve or ruin the relationships between faith communities. These important issues have led to the emergence of three types of theology of religion in Christianity: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. This thesis aims to analyse the views on the diversity of religions of two contemporary Shi‘ah thinkers, Ayatollah ‘Abdullah Javadi and Professor Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub, who come from two distinctly different milieus. It demonstrates that although the scholars of a single denomination may refer to the same sources and believe in the same theological concepts, their understandings of a single text may differ due to their social and educational backgrounds. In order to further elaborate on the positions of these two scholars, this thesis also looks at the views of three earlier influential scholars, namely, al-Tusi, Sadr al-Din Shirazi and al-Ansari, who attempt to cast light upon religions diversity from theological, exegetical and jurisprudential perspectives. The thesis finds that both Javadi and Ayoub are in unison over the invalidity of non-revealed religions, but they attempt to address it from two different angles. They, nevertheless, differ in the question of the validity of revealed religions. These thinkers believe that all revealed religions are similar in terms of their fundamental beliefs because they are based on the immutable *fitrah* of mankind, while this thesis argues that the similarity originates in their rational provability. As for the diversity of religious practices, whereas Ayoub maintains it has been caused by the variety of races, languages and cultures of mankind, Javadi believes that the religious practices are varied because they were established based on the capacity of mankind for knowledge and practice, which has improved and has led to new laws and regulations. The thesis also comprehensively assesses the views of the two thinkers on the interpretation of the most cited Qur’anic verse (2:62) regarding religious pluralism and compares them with the views of Ayatollah Ja‘far Sobhani as one of the most influential contemporary Shi‘ah theologians. This inquiry also highlights the views of Ayoub and Javadi on the question of dialogue, its common ground, goals and presuppositions.

**Declaration**

I declare that the material within this thesis is original and my own work, apart from the particular references which are clearly outlined throughout. My findings have not been used for any other purposes other than this specific assignment.

Saeid Eghbal Sobhani

## **Acknowledgment**

I would like to thank Professor Hugh Goddard and Professor Andrew Newman for their invaluable support and assistance throughout this thesis. I would also like to pay my gratitude towards my family for their continuous encouragement during the course of the thesis.

## **Note on Transliteration of Arabic and Persian Words and Translations of the Qur'an**

Throughout the thesis, a simplified version of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (IJMES) transliteration guide has been used. The Arabic letter 'ayn has been shown by a single opening quotation mark (‘), as in *Jum‘ah*. The sign of *hamzah* is represented by a single closing quotation mark (’), as in Qur’an. Initial *hamzah* is not marked, like *asbab*. The Arabic letter of *wav* has been represented by (w), as in *wahy*, while the Persian letter *vav* has been shown by (v), as in *ravish*. The letter “h” at the end of words such as *Jum‘ah* has been retained.

All the Qur’anic verses are from Aliquli Qara’i’s translation published by ICAS in London in 2005.

## Contents

Introduction	10
Setting the Discourse .....	11
Diversity of Religions .....	12
The Value of Research.....	14
Methodology .....	15
Outline of the Work .....	17
1 Chapter One: Christian Approaches to Other Religions	20
1.1 Introduction.....	20
1.2 Approaches to Religious Diversity .....	21
1.3 Religious Exclusivism .....	22
1.4 Evaluation .....	26
1.5 Religious Inclusivism.....	27
1.6 Evaluation .....	28
1.7 Religious Pluralism.....	30
2.9 Conclusion .....	43
2 Chapter Two: A Brief History of Shi‘ah Attitudes to Religious Diversity	44
2.1 Introduction.....	44
2.2 Al-Shaykh al-Tusi .....	46
2.2.1 Biography.....	46
2.2.2 The <i>Shari‘ah</i> of Prophet Muhammad before Islam .....	47
2.2.3 The Meaning of Islam .....	48
2.2.4 Muslims and the Followers of Other Religions .....	50
2.3 Sadr al-Din Shirazi.....	51
2.3.1 Biography.....	51
2.3.2 The True Religion .....	52
2.3.3 Validity and Salvation.....	54
2.4 Al-Shaykh Al-Ansari .....	56
2.4.1 Biography.....	56
2.4.2 The Concept of <i>Din</i> and Islam .....	58
2.4.3 The Concept of the People of the Book .....	58
2.4.4 Islam and Previous Religions.....	59
2.5 Conclusion .....	61
3 Chapter Three: Biography and Works of Javadi and Ayoub	63

3.1	Ayatollah Javadi.....	63
3.1.1	Biography.....	63
3.1.2	Interfaith Dialogue .....	65
3.1.3	Publications.....	68
3.2	Professor Ayoub.....	78
3.2.1	Biography.....	78
3.2.2	Education .....	83
3.2.3	Career.....	83
3.2.4	Publications.....	84
4	Chapter Four: Ayatollah Javadi and Religions .....	96
4.1	Introduction.....	96
4.2	First Part: Javadi and the Diversity of Religions .....	96
4.2.1	Definitions of Religion.....	96
4.2.1.1	Types of Definition .....	98
4.2.1.1.1	The Substantive Definition .....	98
4.2.1.1.2	The Functional Definition .....	99
4.2.2	Classification of Religions .....	101
4.2.3	The Validity of Non-Revealed Religions.....	102
4.2.4	The validity of Revealed Religions.....	106
4.2.4.1	Classification of Divine Prophets.....	107
4.2.4.2	The Reasons for the Huge Number of the Divine Prophets.....	108
4.2.4.2.1	Distortion .....	109
4.2.4.2.1.1	The Capacity and Ability of Man for Learning.....	110
4.2.4.2.1.2	Scattered Population .....	111
4.2.4.3	Pluralism and the Diversity of Religions .....	112
4.2.4.3.1	Javadi and the Diversity of Religious Beliefs .....	113
4.2.4.3.2	Javadi and the Diversity of <i>Shari'ahs</i> .....	116
4.2.4.3.2.1	The Rationale for the Unchangeability of the Main Religious Laws .....	119
4.2.4.3.2.1.1	Definition of <i>Fitrah</i> .....	119
4.2.4.3.2.1.2	The <i>Fitrah</i> and the Unchangeability of Religious Laws .....	121
4.2.4.3.2.1.2.1	The Stability of Man's <i>Fitrah</i> .....	122
4.2.4.4	Islam and the Validity of Other Revealed Religions .....	124
4.2.4.4.1	Rational Justification.....	125



4.2.4.4.1.1	Comprehensiveness of Islam.....	125
4.2.4.4.1.2	Universality of Islam.....	128
4.2.4.4.2	The Traditional Justifications.....	129
4.3	Second part: Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence .....	133
4.3.1	Introduction.....	133
4.3.2	The Unity and Peace between Muslims and Non-Muslims .....	134
4.3.3	The Qur'anic Grounds for Peaceful Coexistence.....	135
4.3.3.1	The Universal Dignity of Man .....	135
4.3.3.2	Keen to Find the Truth .....	135
4.3.3.3	Respecting the Sacred Rites and Symbols .....	136
4.3.3.4	The Divine Books .....	137
4.3.4	Conclusion .....	137
5	Chapter Five: Professor Ayoub and Religions .....	140
5.1	Dialogue.....	140
5.1.1	Ayoub and the Definition of Dialogue.....	142
5.1.2	Ayoub and the Necessity of Dialogue.....	143
5.1.3	Ayoub and the Foreground of Dialogue.....	145
5.1.4	Ayoub and the Aims of Dialogue .....	148
5.1.5	Prerequisites of Dialogue .....	151
5.1.5.1	The First Prerequisite: Insider Presentation .....	151
5.1.5.2	The Second Prerequisite: Equal and Mutual Acceptance .....	152
5.1.5.3	The Third Prerequisite: Objectivity .....	153
5.1.6	Conclusion .....	154
5.2	The Second Part: Islam and Diversity of Religions .....	155
5.2.1	Introduction.....	155
5.2.2	Ayoub and Classification of Religions .....	156
5.2.3	Ayoub and the Question of Validity of Non-Revealed Religions.....	157
5.2.4	The Nature of Revealed Religions .....	159
5.2.5	Ayoub and the Validity of Revealed Religions.....	161
5.2.5.1	Contradictory Teachings of Revealed Religions.....	163
5.2.5.2	Non-Contradictory Differences between Revealed Religions .....	166
5.2.6	Ayoub and the Validity of Revealed Religions in the Qur'an .....	169
5.2.7	Ayoub and Muslim Exclusivism.....	173
5.3	Conclusion .....	180

6	Chapter Six: Comparison and Evaluation of the Views of Javadi and Ayoub	183
6.1	Introduction.....	183
6.2	The Academic Life of Javadi and Ayoub .....	183
6.2.1	Placing Javadi and Ayoub in their Cultural and Educational Settings.....	184
6.2.2	Differences in Interest and Approach .....	188
6.3	Classification of Religions in the Eyes of the Two Thinkers.....	190
6.4	Definition of Religion According to Ayoub and Javadi .....	193
6.5	Critique of Javadi of ‘Western Definitions’ .....	197
6.6	The Problem of the Validity of Non-Revealed Religions .....	200
6.7	The Two Thinkers and the Validity of Revealed Religions.....	202
6.7.1	Religious Beliefs .....	203
6.7.2	Religions Practices .....	209
6.7.2.1	Similarities and Dissimilarities .....	210
6.7.2.1.1	Ayoub and the Rationale for Dissimilarities of <i>Shari’ahs</i> .....	211
6.7.2.1.2	Javadi and the Rationale for Dissimilarities of <i>Shari’ahs</i> .....	216
6.8	Evaluation .....	219
6.9	Ayoub and Javadi: Comparison with Western Pluralists and Exclusivists .....	227
6.9.1	Ayoub and Hick .....	227
6.9.2	Javadi and Other Exclusivists .....	230
6.10	Conclusion .....	231
7	Chapter Seven: Comparative Analysis of Javadi’s and Ayoub’s Qur’anic Approaches to Religious Diversity	234
7.1	Introduction.....	234
7.2	Verse 2:62 and the People of the Book.....	235
7.3	Ayatollah Javadi’s Interpretation .....	235
7.4	Professor Ayoub’s Interpretation .....	239
7.5	Evaluating the Views of Javadi and Ayoub .....	246
7.6	Ayatollah Sobhani’s Interpretation .....	251
7.7	Conclusion .....	255
8	Chapter Eight: Conclusion	257
8.1	Further Research .....	265
9	Bibliography	268

## **Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century began with a dramatic encounter between Islam and the West. The attack on the twin towers in September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 not only shook the world but changed the way the world looked at Islam. The ensuing developments, which were dubbed “War on Terror”, led to the creation of the most pernicious terrorist groups under the banner of Islam. In such gloomy situation, many ordinary people in the West began to look at Muslims with suspicion to the extent that, as *The Independent* reported in 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017 from one of the witnesses, “two innocent Muslim men were marched off plane and searched as two English ladies refused to fly with them on the plane”.

In such a climate, a conscious and unconscious project of stereotyping Islam gradually helped present it as a monolithic entity in which most Muslims, if not all, were accused of supporting or believing in terror. Considering the fact that Muslims form almost a quarter of the world’s population, it is quite obvious that such a mindset and attitude cannot and should not persist. However, removing such a mentality is not easy and needs social, political and academic work.

An important aim of this research is to show that Islam is not a monolithic entity and as it is comprised of different races, nations, cultures, and denominations, it has a colourful spectrum of views among its thinkers and theologians. It has Shi’ahs and Sunnis, Salafis and Sufis, moderates and extremists, and pluralists and exclusivists.

After 9/11 and the ensuing events, the attention of many academic centres in the West was drawn to the views of Sayyid Qutb and Abu al-A'la Mawdudi in an effort to analyse the extremist behaviour of certain Muslim groups. Although these studies are important in their own right, the views of other Muslim thinkers must not be neglected, especially those who have tried to ponder over diversity of religions and their peaceful coexistence, validity of other faiths, salvation of followers of different religions, and many other refreshing ideas.

It is this negligence that this thesis aims to overcome. It tries to fill a vacuum in academia in the field of Islamic Studies. It shows, in its own limited way, the diversity of thoughts, methodologies, and understandings among Muslim scholars in general and among Shi'ah Muslim theologians in particular. For this aim, the thesis will try to explain and compare the views of two influential Shi'ah theologians, Ayatollah Abdullah Javadi, and Professor Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub regarding the diversity of religions and all the related theological discussions that arise from it.

### **Setting the Discourse**

Until one or two centuries ago, most Christians in the North of America and Western Europe were probably not familiar with “the religious diversity of the world,” let alone being aware of its significance. For them, “different religions” would probably have been comprehended to refer purely to a medieval conflict between “Protestantism and Catholicism”.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, in the recent decades, the world is arguably reduced to a “global village”. Mankind lives in a new era now which is very different from the past in many aspects. Significant improvements in communication technology and the wealth of information produced by that have contributed to this reduction.<sup>2</sup> Among many other things, the global village has paved the way for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Alister E McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Chichester: Willy Blackwell, 2017). 406.

<sup>2</sup> John Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths: Critical Dialogues on Religious Pluralism* (London: SCM Press, 1995). 12-3; Alan Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*, 2 ed. (London: SCM Press, 1983). 1-2. Aydin refers to these two mentioned references, but I have also checked them. Mahmut Aydin, "Religious Pluralism: A Challenge for Muslims - A Theological Evaluation," *Journal of Educational Studies* 38, no. 2-3 (2001). 331. See also; William Montgomery Watt, *Religious Truth for Our Time* (Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 1995). 84-6; Ian

theologians of religions to be familiar with other's thoughts more deeply than before. Consequently, Christian scholars "in the modern world" have highlighted the significance of rational justification in the realm of relation to other faiths.<sup>3</sup> It is no longer possible for one single faith to dominate a region. Churches, mosques, Hindu temples, synagogues and gurdwaras can now be found in the same areas in many Western cities. People in the past "never foresaw the day when Birmingham would have, as it now does, two Muslim mosques and twenty prayer-houses".<sup>4</sup>

This new phenomenon has produced three interrelated outcomes. First, now we can more easily "place ourselves in the shoes" of the followers of other religions to "see how the world looks through the eyes" of educated, intelligent and "religiously and morally sensitive" believers. Second, awareness of the intellectual influence and spiritual experience of other religions makes it harder to disregard them "as misguided" or to maintain our "confidence in the superiority of our tradition". Third, two inquiries become imperative: Do the main religions "agree on essentials"? If not, how should theologians respond to the diversity of religions?<sup>5</sup>

### **Diversity of Religions**

The question of diversity of religions is a topic that has attracted much attention in the past and present century and has settled itself in the list of the topics studied under the philosophy of religion. The scope of the topics examined by the philosophers of religion is now more comprehensive than at any other time. We are witnessing a constant and noticeable growth of contributions by the philosophers of the field some of whom have risen to great prominence. However, I agree with David A. Pailin who states that the philosophers of religion are more successful at multiplying questions than resolving them and that their answers are not

---

G. Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1998). xiv.

<sup>3</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 407.

<sup>4</sup> Don Cupitt, *Sea of Faith*, 3 ed. (London: SCM Press, 2003). 163.

<sup>5</sup> William J. Wainwright, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2 ed. (London: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999). 201.

conceivable.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, their questions may create new fields of inquiry and pave the way for new horizons of thought in the next generations.

Religious diversity is arguably one of those questions. The existence of different religions, the truths of other faiths and their claims to salvation have been reflected upon by theologians in the course of history of religions. Glyn Richards holds that, over the past centuries, there has been momentous progress “in the awareness of religious pluralism”.<sup>7</sup> The concern with the diversity of religions, he adds, is clearly perceived in the “declarations of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church” in 1963-5 regarding the salvation of non-Christians who call God sincerely. He adds that this concern has emerged due to the growing acquaintance of theologians with other faiths.<sup>8</sup>

Today we are facing the “perplexing diversity” of religious teachings. The “representative congregations or conclaves” of these religions have been found increasingly in many parts of the world.<sup>9</sup> It is reasonable, as Wainwright states, to claim that the questions related to religions can be divided into two categories: the questions solely associated with one particular religion—such as the “Trinity, the incarnation or atonement, and original sin,” which only concern Christianity—and those questions that are general and not associated with one particular religion only.<sup>10</sup> The question of religious diversity is amongst the issues that are associated with all religious traditions. Theologians are keen to be aware of the religious truths of other faiths and to evaluate them.

Richards argues that the “significant growth in the awareness of religious pluralism” in the West has appeared in the course of the past century.<sup>11</sup> Although this is true, we cannot overlook great attempts made by prominent scholars in Islam to elaborate some approaches to, and foundations for, this notion. But to the best of my knowledge, no comparative study has been carried out on this concept and the related

---

<sup>6</sup> David A. Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion* (London: Epworth Press, 1986). 5.

<sup>7</sup> Glyn Richards, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London/New York: Routledge, 1989). ix.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 9-12.

<sup>9</sup> Keith E. Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion* (London/New York: Eoutledge, 1999). 16.

<sup>10</sup> William J. Wainwright, "Christianity," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Philip L. Quinn (Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999). 56-7.

<sup>11</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology of Religions*, ix.

verses of the Qur'an, in the sense of assessing and evaluating the views and exegetical principles of Muslim exclusivists and pluralists among Shi'ah or Sunni scholars.

The importance of a comparative study cannot be overstated in this field. The philosophers of religion, in order to appreciate other religions, should employ a comparative approach. This method can pave the way for theologians to address and evaluate religions comprehensively. A comparative approach, as Rodrigues and Harding correctly state, is unavoidable for any "study that includes categories". They even hold that "it is apparent in any study that uses language".<sup>12</sup>

### **The Value of Research**

Despite remarkable and sizeable research in the field, little has been done in the realm of comparative studies on the views of Muslim thinkers in this area. Such comparative studies not only demonstrate the diversity of thoughts among Muslims regarding religious diversity but also shed some light on the theological foundations of the discussion. Obviously, it is not possible to introduce all the views postulated by Muslim thinkers in this regard here. Thus, I will confine myself to the standpoints of the scholars of one denomination only. This enquiry, therefore, aims to address the ideas of two prominent Shi'ah thinkers: Ayatollah 'Abdullah Javadi and Professor Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub. The originality of such a study is evident since no literature has been previously produced comparing the views of these two eminent Shi'ah thinkers on this subject. While more than one hundred critical books have been written on John Hick's viewpoint, as Adnan Aslan claims<sup>13</sup>, to the best of my knowledge, no study has been carried on about the views of Shi'ah scholars regarding the diversity of religions, let alone a comparative study of the views and sources of Muslim pluralists and exclusivists.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009). 136.

<sup>13</sup> Adnan Aslan, *Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998). 207.

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that Sajjad H. Rizvi recently has addressed the views of two Shi'ah pluralists, that is, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari and Abdolkarim Soroush. See; Sajjad H. Rizvi, "Oneself as the Saved Other? The Ethics and Soteriology of Difference in Two Muslim Thinkers," in *Between*

The reasons that led me to study the views of these two thinkers are as follows:

- 1- Both thinkers have been extremely influential in the past couple of decades in two distinctly different circles. Ayoub has influenced the minds of the educated people in the West, and Javadi is arguably one of the most prominent teachers of Shi'ah thought in the famous seminary of Qum.
- 2- Ayoub as a Western-trained scholar with an Arab background (Lebanon), has been working mainly in a Muslim-minority setting and writing mainly in English while Javadi, born in Iran and trained in the traditional seminary of Qum, has been working in a Muslim-majority context and writing mainly in Persian.
- 3- Ayoub presents a pluralistic view of the Qur'an whereas Javadi takes a sort of exclusivist approach.
- 4- Both are very prolific Muslim writers in the realm of Qur'anic interpretation, theology and history.
- 5- Both thinkers are involved in inter-religious dialogue with the scholars of other religions.
- 6- Whereas Ayoub mostly attempts to understand the diversity of religions from Qur'anic viewpoints, Javadi attempts to appreciate the diversity of religions with a rational-analytical approach.
- 7- They attempt to distinguish between religious beliefs and religious practices and to highlight their philosophy of the unity or plurality of such beliefs and practices.

### **Methodology**

While admitting that Muslim exclusivists and pluralists meant well and sincerely attempted to disclose the reality, I will do my best to address the diversity of religions through a comparative study. The methodology of this thesis will be based mainly on qualitative research as it will rely on description, content analysis, and critical comparison of theoretical knowledge. As the study is looking at compatibility

---

*Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*, ed. Mohammad Hassan Khalil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). 180-206.



issues on a theoretical/philosophical level, the research will be theoretical as opposed to practical, i.e. it will be desk-research. Intra-textual hermeneutics will be used to examine how different scholars have differently understood the related Qur'anic texts and also to consider them comparatively in the light of other parts of the Qur'an. However, there will be nuances of this method in different chapters. The methodology from the first to the fifth chapter will be mostly narrative and descriptive. It aims to help comprehend and elaborate what the two thinkers want to convey. Putting it differently, it tries to place itself in the shoes of the two thinkers to see how the diversity looks in their eyes. Moreover, in order to prove what they hold, it resorts to the relevant Qur'anic verses, Islamic narrations (i.e., hadiths) and the viewpoints of other Muslim exegetes. The methodology in the sixth and seventh chapters will be slightly different. The method of research in Chapter Six will be within the boundaries of the philosophy of religion. It attempts to intellectually investigate the religious viewpoints in terms of coherence, consistency, plausibility and truthfulness. The method, in Chapter Seven will be confined to exegetical principles.

In the field of religious studies, there are two types of comparative approaches. One kind of approach, in order to present one particular religion more favourable, attempts to point out how other traditions' "values are misguided". The "evangelical (i.e. missionary) tradition" may be placed in this category. The other approach tries to comprehend the traditions "more effectively" via comparison.<sup>15</sup> This research is intended to follow the latter.

This study does not aim only to repeat the views as they are stated. Such a method is, as Pailin argues, "the intellectual burping that so often is confused with ability". The aim is "to add to the stock of our resources on which we can use our imagination and develop our insights".<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that even within a single religion, there is a multiplicity of views whose roots this work attempts to explore.

---

<sup>15</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 136.

<sup>16</sup> Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy*. 238.

## Outline of the Work

This study contains eight chapters:

1- Since most of the literature in this area has been produced by contemporary Christian thinkers, Ayoub and Javadi's discussions are in a way connected to their views. Thus, it is necessary to discuss those views first to place the ideas of Ayoub and Javadi in their proper context. Hence, the first chapter aims to look at Christian thinking in terms of its attitudes towards other religions. The triple classification usually proposed by Christian theologians, namely, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism, will be discussed here.<sup>17</sup> Exclusivism holds that only Christianity possesses the truth and can provide salvation for Christians. They argue that the followers of other religions cannot achieve salvation.<sup>18</sup> Inclusivism maintains that only one particular religion possesses the truth, but, unlike the exclusivists, the adherents of inclusivism keep room for the salvation of the followers of other religions.<sup>19</sup> Pluralism attempts to prove that the major religions possess the truth and naturally can provide salvation for their followers.<sup>20</sup> Although these triple categories were born within Christian thinking, they are not exclusively Christian phenomena. In other words, this classification can be found in the works of the theologians of other religions.

2- Although the question of the diversity of religions, the truth of other faiths and their claims to salvation have been comprehensively subjected to discussion by Western scholars in the past couple of centuries, the issue has to some extent been discussed by Muslim thinkers in the past, too. Since Javadi and Ayoub have been both impacted by that tradition and contributed new views and ideas to it, the second chapter aims to look at the history of Shi'ah attitudes towards religious diversity. It is, therefore, intended to address briefly the works of three prominent Shi'ah thinkers, namely, al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Tusi, Sadr al-Din Shirazi and al-Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari. They attempted to look at the question of the diversity of

---

<sup>17</sup> John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985). 31. See also; Race, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*. 10, 38, 70.

<sup>18</sup> John Hick, "Religious Pluralism," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York/London: Macmillan/Collier Macmillan, 1987). 331

<sup>19</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 32-3.

<sup>20</sup> Gavin D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). 22.

religions from different perspectives many centuries ago. The aim of this chapter, therefore, will be a short investigation of the intellectual and theological arguments presented by these three well-known Shi'ah scholars.

3- The concern of the third chapter will be a short intellectual and historical biography of Ayatollah Javadi and Professor Ayoub. It aims to discuss the issues that made up their theological and philosophical backgrounds. This part also aims to provide a survey of their books relevant to the diversity of religions.

4- The fourth chapter will be concerned with views of Javadi on the plurality of religions. It will first try to address the definitions and classifications of religions amongst Western thinkers. It will then refer to Javadi's classification, that is, revealed and non-revealed religions. Javadi's rationale for the invalidity of non-revealed religions will be argued in this chapter. It further addresses the reasons for, and the roots of, similarities and dissimilarities in the realm of religious beliefs and rulings in the revealed religions. The question of validity of previous *shari'ahs* will be considered in this chapter as well. The Qur'anic principles of peace and coexistence with the followers of other religions will be discussed at the end. The views of Javadi on the question of unity and peace between Muslims and the followers of other faiths and the Qur'anic grounds for peaceful coexistence will be highlighted.

5- The fifth chapter highlights Ayoub's perspective on the plurality of religions. His view is that sticking to the exclusivist approach would lead to lack of inclination towards dialogue and could cause conflict amongst believers. According to him, one of the preoccupations of Muslim theologians has been to pave the way for establishing fruitful dialogue in the light of the Qur'anic verses and hadiths. Thus, the first section will focus on dialogue, its significance, aims, prerequisites and goals. The second section will consider the classification of religions and their validity in the eyes of the Qur'an. The views of some contemporary Sunni and Shi'ah exegetes on one of the most cited verse regarding religious pluralism will also be discussed.

6- The sixth chapter first will address and compare the academic and educational backgrounds of Ayoub and Javadi and the milieus in which they lived, which were

instrumental in their different perspectives and conclusions. It will then compare and evaluate the viewpoints of Javadi and Ayoub on the diversity of faiths from a rational standpoint. In this rational evaluation, both thinkers' views will be discussed based on intellectual reasoning. This chapter, moreover, attempts to assess analytically their belief in the invalidity of non-revealed religions. The philosophy of the unity of religious beliefs in the revealed religions, as they see it, will be considered critically. It will try to examine whether man's primordial nature (*fitrah*) is reasonable and sufficient evidence for the unity of the religious beliefs of revealed religions. The question of validity of the previous religions in the eyes of both thinkers will be addressed from a rational perspective.

7- The seventh chapter will compare and evaluate the Qur'anic standpoints of the two thinkers on the most cited verse regarding religious pluralism. It attempts to illustrate how these two exegetes have arrived at two different conclusions. To better judge each of these two views, it is important to see what other contemporary interpretations are suggested for the verse by Shi'ah scholars. For this reason, the views of one of the most influential Shi'ah scholar, that is, Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani, who like Javadi, was a student of Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i (1904-1981) will be presented.

8- The eighth chapter will summarize all the significant discussions, standpoints and critiques which have been mentioned in the preceding chapters. At the end, I will suggest certain related areas that are in need of further research.

I would like to finish the introduction with an interesting comment by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000). He says that "we are not so fond as to imagine that our treatment of the issue here raised is adequate", but I want to highlight the significance of these issues.

It is true that not every book can reveal the "authors' aspirations".<sup>21</sup> However, I hope that this research, as a comparative study, provides intellectually acceptable answers. The thesis does not claim that it will fulfil all the expectations; however, it hopes that it may pave the way for further research.

---

<sup>21</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957). v-vi.

# 1 Chapter One: Christian Approaches to Other Religions

## 1.1 Introduction

With the great increase in the world trade and considerable improvement in communication technology and mass media, the world has been changed to a global village, and people are experiencing a new age in human relations. It seems that it is no longer possible for one single culture or religion to dominate a region or country because each city may now have residents of various faiths and cultures. In some cities of the world, the places of worship of various religions, such as mosques and churches, are located next to each other, a fact that signals how multi-religious our societies have become. As Smith puts it, humankind's religious life "from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in a context of religious pluralism".<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is not possible for religious people today, as Hans Küng rightly claims, to live in "splendid isolation and ignore the others".<sup>23</sup> Nowadays, because of the strong interrelationship of people of different religious persuasions, it is impossible for the adherents of a religion to be content with learning their own religious teachings only and ignore the deep insights of other faiths. As Paul F. Knitter truly declares, learning about such insights may enable believers to have a deep and resolute understanding of their own religion in the global village.<sup>24</sup>

The issue of religious plurality, the truths of other faiths and their capability of offering salvation is probably as old as the diversity of religions. The concern with religious diversity, as Richards argues, is clearly seen in "the declarations of the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church" in 1963-5 regarding the salvation of non-Christians who seek God sincerely.<sup>25</sup>

Usually every religion considers itself as the true and perfect religion that is able to lead its followers toward salvation. One of the most significant issues for the

---

<sup>22</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York/London: Harper Torchbook, 1963). 11.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Collins, 1977). 89.

<sup>24</sup> Paul F. Knitter, "The Meeting of Religions: A Christian Debate," in *Only One Way?* (London: SCM Press, 2011). 52.

<sup>25</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 9. I draw on this book for many of the sources in this chapter although I directly checked all of them.

theologians, in the course of history, however, has been the problem of truth claims of other traditions and the question of their salvation. Do the world's religions differ in form or in kind? Can one tradition only be true and all others false? Is the revelation of God through a specific person, like Jesus, the only criterion for the validity of religions and consequently for their salvation claims? These questions have led the theologians to consider the nature and claims of other religions and to ponder about the fate of their followers.

The aim of this thesis is to examine and compare the views of two prominent Shi'ah Muslim scholars, namely Professor Ayoub and Ayatollah Javadi, on the plurality of religions and their answers to the above questions. However, since these questions were first posed and elaborately examined by Western scholars, and since the discussions of Ayoub and Javadi are in a way connected to those discussions, I will first try to present a summary of those views as discussed among the Western authors.

Naturally, an exhaustive treatment of all those views is neither possible nor desirable here; hence, this chapter will examine the views of only a few of the major contributors of the field. It aims to take a general look at the Christian approaches to the diversity of religions and addresses the triple classification of approaches to religions and criticism of those approaches. It also tries to look at the views of theologians of other religions on this classification.

## **1.2 Approaches to Religious Diversity**

One of the most influential authors and promoters of religious pluralism was the theologian and philosopher of religion John Hick (1922-2012). He proposed a triple classification of approaches to religious diversity, namely, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.<sup>26</sup> This classification, as Perry Schmidt-Leukel claims, entered Christian theology through Alan Race and Gavin D'Costa in 1983, and although it was later criticized by some theologians<sup>27</sup>, including D'Costa himself, it seems to

---

<sup>26</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 31.

<sup>27</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation Question* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 7.

offer the best classification so far suggested.<sup>28</sup> Thus, I propose to discuss each of the three approaches in some detail.

### 1.3 Religious Exclusivism

According to religious exclusivists, only one particular (i.e., their own) religion holds the truth and can provide salvation for its followers. While the exclusivists do not completely reject the possibility of truth in other religions, they maintain that only the followers of one tradition can reach salvation. Therefore, the believers of other religions, even if they have sincere beliefs and lead a pious life, cannot achieve salvation.<sup>29</sup>

Pointing to some verses of the New Testament such as “No one can come to the Father but by me,”<sup>30</sup> many Christians have maintained an exclusivist viewpoint throughout history; hence, the position that there is “outside the church no salvation” has been repeated since the beginning of the third century. This view of Christian salvation led to the appearance of Christian “missionary movements” in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>31</sup> In 1854, Pope Pius IX also declared that “it is to be held by faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved; it is the only ark of salvation and anyone who does not enter it will perish in the flood”.<sup>32</sup> This exclusivist position goes to the extreme of claiming that even the exalted Prophets “must wait in Limbo until the resurrection, after which Christ must come to release them”.<sup>33</sup>

The exclusivist approach can also be found in the classical texts of Christian theology. Saint Augustine (354-430) in the *City of God* holds that the life of man in the world is like a “hell on the earth”. He adds that “there is no escape from it other

---

<sup>28</sup> Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism," in *The Myth of Religious Superiority Multifaith Explorations of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Paul Knitter (New York: Orbis Books, 2005). 17-8. He has collected eight major criticisms of this classification by Western scholars.

<sup>29</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 31. For other approaches, see, Chad Meister, *Introducing Philosophy of Religion* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009). 26.

<sup>30</sup> John, 14:6. For more similar verses, see Reinhold Bernhardt, *Christianity without Absolutes*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994). 53-60.

<sup>31</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism." 331.

<sup>32</sup> Heinz Robert Schlette, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London: Burns/Oates LTD, 1966). 16. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Legenhausen, *Islam and Religious Pluralism* (Tehran: al-Hoda, 1999). 97.

than through the grace of Christ”.<sup>34</sup> He maintains that the “only way that is” absolutely free from all types of error and mistake is “when one and the same person is at once God and man”.<sup>35</sup> Such position, moreover, can be found in some mystical texts of Christianity. For instance, Thomas A Kempis (1379-1471), in *Imitation of Christ*, a classic Christian work of morality and mysticism, points to some verses of the New Testament that claim that “There is no salvation of soul, nor hope of eternal life, save in the Cross. Take up the Cross, therefore, and follow Jesus and go forward into eternal life”.<sup>36</sup> He considers the teachings of Jesus as the infallible and “ultimate Truth”.<sup>37</sup> Referring to the verse “He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness,”<sup>38</sup> Kempis argues that if we follow Jesus we can attain “true enlightenment” and be free “from all blindness of heart”.<sup>39</sup>

Karl Barth (1886-1968), the great Protestant theologian of the twentieth century, holds, as Richards states, that human beings cannot comprehend the essence of God, that they are unable to discover Him by their efforts and that He will be discovered to them only through His own “initiative in self-revelation”. Moreover, for Barth, God has one revelation only: Christ—and it is impossible to reach truth and salvation without him. Richards adds that “Christianity is only considered to be a true religion when it is justified and sanctified by revelation”.<sup>40</sup> It seems that the “sharp distinction between faith and religion” is the main characteristic of Christian exclusivists.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Richards points out that for Barth, Christianity is the sole true faith.<sup>42</sup> Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965) is another Christian exclusivist. He emphasizes the exclusive revelation of God and argues that “If we are ever to know what true and divinely willed religion is, we can do this only through God’s revelation in Jesus Christ and through nothing else”.<sup>43</sup> In the eyes of Kraemer, since “the Revelation of God in

---

<sup>34</sup> Saint Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011). 1156.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 451. See also pages 1091-1106.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas A Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958). 84.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 171.

<sup>38</sup> John, 8:12.

<sup>39</sup> Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*. 27.

<sup>40</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 119-20.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Hendrik Kraemer, *Why Christianity of All Religions?* (London: Lutterworth Pres, 1962). 79.



Jesus Christ is alone absolute, alone unmovable,” it is the only touchstone for the reality,<sup>44</sup> and the other religions are “all in error”.<sup>45</sup>

Seizing upon such verses as “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”<sup>46</sup> and “there is no salvation by anyone else, for no one else in all the wide world has been appointed among men as our only medium by which to be saved,”<sup>47</sup> James Borland attempts to prove that belief in Jesus is the only path to salvation.<sup>48</sup> Given the verse “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but who does not believe will be condemned”,<sup>49</sup> Borland concludes that if the Biblical teachings and orders were stressed by Christ 2000 years ago, they should be offered to the whole world in the present age, too.<sup>50</sup>

In view of the above points, it can be argued that, as Michael Peterson et al. also concede, exclusivists stick to apologetic arguments only. They hold that salvation can be achieved only by “a divine act of grace,” and if we discovered “where God has truly revealed his unique purposes,” it would be foolish to look for salvation anywhere else.<sup>51</sup>

It should be noted that exclusivism is not solely a “Christianity phenomenon”.<sup>52</sup> Jews identify themselves as an exclusively “God-chosen people”. Hindus respect the “Vedas as eternal and absolute,” and Buddhists have traditionally taken the teachings of Gautama to be the only “*dharma*” that is capable of freeing man from misery and illusion in life. Some Muslims, too, maintain strong exclusivist views, although Hick believes that Islamic exclusivism has no clear Qur’anic foundation.<sup>53</sup> These Muslims resort to the Qur’an and argue that the only religion acceptable to God is the

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 93. see also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 24.

<sup>46</sup> John, 14:6.

<sup>47</sup> Act, 4:12.

<sup>48</sup> Borland Jeams, "Religious Exclusivism," in *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. M. Peterson, et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). 498.

<sup>49</sup> Mark, 16:15-6.

<sup>50</sup> Jeams, "Religious Exclusivism." 500-1.

<sup>51</sup> Michael Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). 222.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism." 331. See also; Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 222-3.

institutionalized religion of Islam. Abdullah al-Baydawi (d. 1290), for example, refers to the verse “Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam”<sup>54</sup> and argues that Muhammad’s religion alone is accepted by God.<sup>55</sup> In a similar fashion, Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) refers to the verse “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter”<sup>56</sup> and claims that “Islam” denotes Muhammad’s teachings only and, consequently, the faith of non-Muslims is not accepted by God.<sup>57</sup> Ibn Kathir al-Damishqi (1302-1375) also attributes an exclusivist meaning to the above verse.<sup>58</sup>

Interpreting the verse “Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve,”<sup>59</sup> Qutb emphasizes his exclusivist position by explaining that the Qur’anic reference to the three groups (“the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans”) applies to the pre-Islamic age only. After the advent of Islam, these groups were supposed to leave their faith and embrace Islam.<sup>60</sup> He adds that, since Muhammad has been a Prophet to all human beings and has asked all people to follow his teachings, salvation would be possible only through his teachings.<sup>61</sup> It seems that for such reasons Hick concedes that, although Prophet Muhammad confirms the previous divine Books, the unique position of the Qur’an does not allow Muslims to accept religious pluralism completely and without qualifications. This is due to the fact that, for Muslims, the Qur’an consists of the “final, decisive and commanding” words of Allah, which ought to be followed.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *The Qur’an*, trans. Aliquli Qara’i, 2 ed. (London: ICAS, 2005). 3:19.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Abdullah Al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta’wil*, 5 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1997). 9.

<sup>56</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:85.

<sup>57</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, 6 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut/Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1991). 423.

<sup>58</sup> Isma‘il Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*, 9 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1998). 60.

<sup>59</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:62.

<sup>60</sup> Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, 1.75-6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. 942.

<sup>62</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 48-9.

## 1.4 Evaluation

As can be seen, in Christianity, the claim of the exclusive revelation of God in Christ is the main feature of exclusivism, a claim that has been criticized by some Christian thinkers. Richards, for example, asks if we accept the Christian exclusivist claim that “revelation is confined to God’s self-disclosure through the Word incarnate in Christ,” how are we supposed to treat the claims of other religions as alleged “recipients of God’s revelation?” For him, an implication of the Christian exclusivist position is that all “other non-Christian religious leaders” are misguided in claiming to have received God’s revelation<sup>63</sup>, and that, for example, Ramakrishna was “mistaken” when he asserted to have achieved “visions of God at Dakshineswar”.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Richards asks, “How do we determine that the revelation is unique in this instance and not in other instances?”<sup>65</sup> Based on similar reasoning, Arnold Toynbee believes that if God loves the guidance of all His creations, He should have revealed Himself to other men as well.<sup>66</sup>

Peterson et al. criticize religious exclusivists by pointing out that they do not offer any reasons for their claim to the unique revelation of God in Christ. They also add that multiple revelations of God would be more conducive to spreading His word than a single one because “just as advertisers can tailor their message to different audiences, so God could speak in diverse ways to different cultures” and “adapt his message to the motifs” of them. Thus, many revelations could have happened with varying features and content. Therefore, according to Peterson et al., religions “might embody diverse perceptions of the divine revelation or salvific truth”. Peterson et al. conclude that “infinite God” can communicate with different people in varied forms and in various divine revelations.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, “exclusive-mindedness”, Toynbee holds, “is a sinful state of mind”. It signifies arrogance and “self-centredness,” which does not agree with the concept of God’s self-sacrifice.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 120.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>66</sup> Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity among the Religions of the World* (New York: Charls Scribner's Sons, 1955). 96. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 31-5.

<sup>67</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 223.

<sup>68</sup> Toynbee, *Christianity among*. 97-9. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 34-5.

Some, as Plantinga tells us, suspect that the exclusivists' idea is "irrational, or egotistical and unjustified, or intellectually arrogant, or elitist, or a manifestation of harmful pride, or even oppressive and imperialistic," but he argues that exclusivism does not necessarily "involve either epistemic or moral failure" but that it is indispensable due to the human situation.<sup>69</sup> According to Plantinga, if exclusivists, after deep and truthful investigations, truly reach an exclusivist position, they will have done their duty and it would be difficult to claim that they were unjustified or wrong.<sup>70</sup> Hick believes that while religious exclusivism has disappeared from many mainstream churches, it is still strongly alive in many "marginal fundamentalist" ones.<sup>71</sup>

### 1.5 Religious Inclusivism

Inclusivism is mainly an answer to the pressure applied by religious pluralism. John Nicola Farquhar (1861-1929), a Scottish Protestant priest, supported this position in *The Crown of Hinduism* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>72</sup> Inclusivists, according to Hick, maintain that there is no more than one true religion, but, unlike exclusivists, they confirm that the believers of other traditions may also achieve salvation.<sup>73</sup> The common ground between exclusivists and inclusivists is that both hold that "there is one absolute provision for salvation" that is provided in only one particular religion. The difference between exclusivists and inclusivists, however, is that for inclusivists, salvation does not exclusively belong to the followers of their own true religion but also to the followers of other religions, on condition that "they meet the special criteria relevant to that true religion", even though they have not heard of the tenets of that religion or practiced it. In this way, it is possible for everyone to be saved.<sup>74</sup> In other words, Christian inclusivists and exclusivists, for instance, both believe that there is only one true religion while inclusivists maintain that salvation is not confined to Christianity and that non-Christian pious people, as Karl Rahner (1904-

---

<sup>69</sup> Alvin Plantinga, "Pluralism: A Defence of Religious Exclusivism," in *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*, ed. Thomas D. Senor (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995). 194-5.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 202.

<sup>71</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 32.

<sup>72</sup> Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. xi. See also; D'Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 32-3.

<sup>74</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 228.

1984) suggests, are also saved as “anonymous Christians”.<sup>75</sup> Peterson et al. quote Rahner regarding the salvation of non-Christians in the following way: “God desires that all persons be saved. To accomplish this salvation, since Jesus’s atoning, salvific work is objective, God can apply the result of Jesus’s work to all human beings, even to those who have never heard of Jesus and his death or have never acknowledged his lordship”.<sup>76</sup> Peterson et al. attempt to justify the inclusivist view with an interesting example. Let us suppose, he says, that there are some debtors in a city who are not able to pay back their debts, while there is a donor in another city who would like to pay money into those people’s accounts anonymously on condition that they use it for paying off their debts. Naturally, the debtors’ lives would be improved even though they do not know the donor. In other words, it is not necessary for those debtors to know the donor in order to be saved.<sup>77</sup>

It seems that there is no equivalent to inclusivism in the Islamic tradition. Because those Muslim theologians who believe that the Christians, for instance, enter paradise (according to some conditions) hold that they enter as Christians not as anonymous Muslims. Consequently, the real debate is between the Muslim exclusivists and pluralists. Therefore, inclusivism is less important amongst Muslim scholars. Further explanation of this point will be given in the final chapter.

## 1.6 Evaluation

The inclusivists have a milder view than exclusivists and push the gates of paradise a little more open. This thought made the “Roman Catholic theology” lose much of its exclusivist emphasis after the “Second Vatican Council” (1962-65). It declared that even some of those who “do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart” and follow the will of God through “the

---

<sup>75</sup>Karl Rahner, "Religious Inclusivism," in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael Peterson, et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996). 503. See also; Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 33.

<sup>76</sup>Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 228.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

dictates of their conscience” can also attain “eternal salvation”.<sup>78</sup> Thus, the exclusivist view of Christianity inclined towards inclusivism.

Hick argues that for inclusivists, while “one particular tradition presents the final truth,” other faiths are not viewed as “worthless or even demonic” but as reflecting “aspects of” or constituting “approaches to that final truth”. He adds that such inclusivist viewpoints assume “the certainty and normativeness of one’s own revelation or illumination” but do not “condemn those who are religiously less privileged because they have been born into other traditions”.<sup>79</sup> Hick points out that inclusivism is now the most favoured opinion amongst Christian thinkers and the heads of the church. The advantage of maintaining such a position is that, on the one hand, it retains “the unique centrality and normativeness of the Christian gospel” and, on the other hand, it avoids the undesirable claim that all non-Christians deserve the fire of hell.<sup>80</sup> Hick takes inclusivism to be a brave position<sup>81</sup> and to be useful for a community that believes in its own religious superiority but believes that this position is logically an “unstable” view. He argues that instead of claiming that there is one single truth, we should argue that “the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate”. According to Hick, we cannot say that one religion only brings salvation to people, but we should believe that “the great religious traditions are to be regarded as alternative soteriological ‘spaces’ within which—or ‘ways’ along which men and women can find salvation”.<sup>82</sup> Hick criticizes the inclusivist idea of “anonymous Christians” as an offensive phrase for non-Christians and wonders if Christians would agree to be identified as anonymous Hindus or anonymous Muslims.<sup>83</sup> Inclusivism does not convince thinkers like Hick who argue that it is a

---

<sup>78</sup> *Vatican Council II the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975). 365. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 9.

<sup>79</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism." 331.

<sup>80</sup> John Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005," (2013).

<sup>81</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 33.

<sup>82</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism." 331.

<sup>83</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005".

form of exclusivism. For Hick, inclusivism is Rahner's definite "contribution to the spinning of epicycles in aid of a basically Ptolemaic theology".<sup>84</sup>

Hick finds some implications of inclusivism unacceptable. For instance, he argues, if we use "the analogy of the solar system, with God as the sun at the centre and the religions as the planets circling around that centre," inclusivism presumes that the Christian church is the primary receiver of "the life-giving warmth and light of the sun" while other religions only receive a reflection of that warmth, which is less than that of Christianity. He adds that the important question is whether this is "an honestly realistic account of the human situation as we observe it on the ground".<sup>85</sup>

At any rate, in the eyes of the inclusivists, there is only one true religion and, therefore, other religions are either false or partially true. The main question here is how these false or partly false religions can provide salvation for their followers. Moreover, we should expect the inclusivists who are the followers of other religions to be saved on condition that they are not aware of the fact that their religions are false (or partly false).

Having discussed religious exclusivism and inclusivism briefly, in what follows, I shall discuss religious pluralism in more detail as it is the main challenge of this thesis.

## **1.7 Religious Pluralism**

As shown above, inclusivism may be called a brave reaction to exclusivism because it provides the possibility of salvation for the followers of not one but many religions. Yet, inclusivism remains exclusivist with regard to the truth of religions because it takes only one religion to be true. For this reason, some modern Christian theologians suggested the idea of religious pluralism, which, as Gavin D'Costa reports, appeared with such thinkers as E. Troeltsch (1865-1923) and W. E. Hocking (1873-1966). But, of all the thinkers, Hick is perhaps "the most thorough and far-

---

<sup>84</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 58.

<sup>85</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005".

reaching representative” of this hypothesis<sup>86</sup>, and for this reason, in what follows, I will elaborate on his formulation of pluralism.

Religious pluralists claim that all the main traditions of the world provide their own methods of achieving salvation or liberation and that they all enjoy religious truths.<sup>87</sup> Hick, who was himself an exclusivist for about twenty-five years<sup>88</sup> (but was later encouraged through frequent visiting of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu places of worship to think of religious pluralism),<sup>89</sup> explains his hypothesis in the following way:

By ‘pluralism’ I mean the view—which I advocate—that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the different cultural ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness is manifestly taking place.<sup>90</sup>

As far as salvation is concerned, Hick draws the conclusion that there is not only one way but many “ways of salvation or liberation”.<sup>91</sup>

But why did pluralism emerge in the first place? It seems that the emergence of this position was the result of the faults and problems theologians found with exclusivism and inclusivism. Philip L. Quinn points to three reasons for the appearance of pluralism,<sup>92</sup> but it seems that the main reason for this was the restrictive position of exclusivists which deprived most people of salvation. Here is Hick’s reasoning for supporting pluralism:

We say as Christians that God is the God of universal love, that he is the creator and Father of all mankind, that he wills the ultimate good and salvation of all men. But we also say, traditionally, that the only way to salvation is the Christian way. And yet we know, when we stop to think about it, that the large majority of the human race who have lived and died up to the present moment have lived either before Christ or outside the borders of Christendom. Can we then accept the conclusion that the God of love who seeks to save all

---

<sup>86</sup> D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. 22. See also; Terry O’keeffe, "Religion and Pluralism," in *Philosophy and Pluralism*, ed. David Archard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 63.

<sup>87</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 34.

<sup>88</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1973). 121.

<sup>89</sup> John Hick, *Disputed Questions in the Theology and the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1993). 141; Paul F. Knitter had similar story. See also; Paul F. Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996). 4-5.

<sup>90</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 91. See also; Hick, "Religious Pluralism." 331.

<sup>91</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 34.

<sup>92</sup> Philip L. Quinn, "Religious Pluralism," in *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London/New York: Routledge, 1998). 260-1.



mankind has nevertheless ordained that men must be saved in such a way that only a small minority can in fact receive this salvation?<sup>93</sup>

In other words, Hick asks: is it possible that God has decided to present the “true religion” to a small minority only?<sup>94</sup> He believes that Christian exclusivism or inclusivism implicitly denies that God, as the only begetter “of the world and of all humanity, is loving, gracious and merciful” and that God’s mercy covers all human beings.<sup>95</sup> It was then no longer reasonable for Hick to believe as a Christian thinker that the teachings of Jesus made the only true tradition.<sup>96</sup> In addition, Hick holds that the believers of other religions are “no less kindly, honest, thoughtful for others, no less truthful, honourable, loving and compassionate” than Christians.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, he suggests that today Christian theology is in need of a “Copernican revolution”, that is to say, “a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is *God* who is at the centre, and all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him”.<sup>98</sup> As a result, he believes that the idea of incarnation needs to be reinterpreted. He claims that if we accept the literal meaning of incarnation, it would follow that the eternal life of salvation is through the Christian faith. The logical conclusion to such a claim would be that the majority of people have not been saved. Therefore, he calls the “idea excessively parochial, presenting God in effect as the tribal deity of the predominantly Christian West” and adds that we cannot believe that “all who are saved are saved by Jesus of Nazareth”.<sup>99</sup>

Knitter offers an interesting discussion in favour of reinterpreting some concepts such as incarnation. He claims that “God or Ultimate Reality” is considered as “Mystery”. It means that it is “beyond human comprehension,” and thus, we cannot

---

<sup>93</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 122.

<sup>94</sup> John Hick, "Foreword," in *The Meaning and End of Religion* (London: Fortress Press, 1991). vi. See also; Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 332.

<sup>95</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005".

<sup>96</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. xviii.

<sup>97</sup> Hick, *The Rainbow of Faiths*. 13.

<sup>98</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*.131; Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 29-30. See also; Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 332-3.

<sup>99</sup> John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions," in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ed. John Hick (London: SCM Press LTD, 1977). 180-1.

express anything about God as “final or full way”. Following Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Rahner, Knitter holds that “God’s talk is symbolic” and, therefore, “beyond human words”. It means that whenever we want to speak about divine things we must “speak in symbols—that is, in metaphors, analogies, images”. In the eyes of Knitter, symbols cannot “capture all that can be said about God”. He adds that “religious language is much closer to poetry than to philosophy”.<sup>100</sup> He argues that “symbols are necessary” when we want to talk about realities which cannot be expressed through normal words. In other words, “symbols enable us to see things we would otherwise not be able to see”.<sup>101</sup> This is why he calls for a reinterpretation of concepts like incarnation that are put symbolically.

For Hick, various religions with different belief systems, sacred books, religious dignitaries, forms of practice and religious customs and rituals “constitute different human responses to the ultimate transcendent reality to which they all, in their different ways, bear witness”.<sup>102</sup> Criticizing most Christian thinkers for not comprehending anything about other faiths, Smith claims that faiths are different “in form, but not in kind,” implying that Jews and Muslims will be saved through their respective religious patterns.<sup>103</sup>

For pluralists, there is no single religion that can reflect the whole Ultimate Reality, but it is all religions that can together do this. Toynbee thinks that it is conceivable for Christians, while believing that their own beliefs are right, to confirm that, to some extent, “all the higher religions are also revelations of what is true and right” and that “they also come from God” and together provide different facets of “God’s truth”, that is, they “are light radiating from the same source from which our own religion derives its spiritual light”.<sup>104</sup> He holds that “His revelation in different forms, with different facets, and to different degrees” is due to “the difference in the nature of individual souls and in the nature of the local tradition of civilization”.<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Knitter, “The Meeting of Religions.” 49-50.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 67.

<sup>102</sup> John Hick, *The Fifth Dimension: An Explanation of the Spiritual Real* (London: SMC Press, 1999). 77.

<sup>103</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1981). 168.

<sup>104</sup> Toynbee, *Christianity among*. 99-100.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 96.

Similarly, for Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), the revelation of God is not only achievable through other faiths, but it is actually indispensable to “reveal the essence of religion”. Schleiermacher takes “religious pluralism” to be very important for the “manifestation of the essence of religion”.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, it seems that the diversity of religions is an inevitable fact in human life.

In response to the question “whether people in church, synagogue, mosque, gurdwara and temple are worshipping different Gods or worshipping the same God,” Hick responds that there is only one God who is the Lord and Creator of all, and “in his infinite fullness and richness of being, he exceeds all our human attempts to grasp him in thought”. Thus, those apparently different worshippers are praying to one God but by different, “overlapping concepts or mental images of him”.<sup>107</sup>

There is no doubt that the beliefs and practices of different religions are not the same. In some religions the ultimate reality is “nondual, apersonal” and “beyond everything” while in other religions, it is “personal—the creator God who is immanently involved in human affairs”.<sup>108</sup> Christianity believes in Trinity<sup>109</sup> and Islam in Unity.<sup>110</sup> It seems that it is not possible, as Heikki Raisanen states, to acknowledge “*Simultaneously* on an objective level both the claims” of the New Testament about Jesus and that of the Qur’an about the revelation of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>111</sup> Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), who was a prominent Hindu religious scholar, goes even so far as to claim that Christianity should be deemed a form of idolatry because a God who has never been born cannot be incarnated in the form of a human being.<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 41-2.

<sup>107</sup> John Hick, “Whatever Path Men Choose Is Mine,” in *Christianity and other religions : Selected Readings*, ed. John Hick & Brian Hebblethwaite (London: Fount Paperbacks, 1980). 177-8.

<sup>108</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 224.

<sup>109</sup> Geoffrey Chapman, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Revised Edition ed. (London: Burns/Oates, 2006). 60.

<sup>110</sup> *The Qur’an*. 112: 1-4.

<sup>111</sup> Heikki Raisanen, *Beyond New Testament Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1990). 136.

<sup>112</sup> Swami Dayananda Saraswati, *Light of Truth*, trans. Chiranjiva Bhardwaja, 2 ed. (Allahabad: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1915). 219. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 124.

Thus, the important question is how various religions which are claimed to point to the same ultimate truth can present opposing concepts of that reality.<sup>113</sup> Hick agrees that religions depict different conceptions of the Reality but he believes that the diversity of conceptions stems from different interpretations of the believers of that Reality. He says “Immanuel Kant has provided (without intending to do so) a philosophical framework within which such a hypothesis can be developed. He distinguished between the world as it is *ansich*, which he called the noumenal world, and the world as it appears to human consciousness, which he called the phenomenal world”.<sup>114</sup> Hick tries to elaborate his idea by the famous story of the elephant and four blind persons. These blind people, who had never faced such an animal before, touched it. One of them felt its leg and decided that it was a giant pillar. Another touched its trunk and believed that it was a big snake. Another felt its tusk and claimed that it was a “sharp ploughshare”. Hick concludes that “they were all true, but each referring only to one aspect of the total reality and all expressed in very imperfect analogies”.<sup>115</sup> Peterson et al. attempt to elucidate the indescribability of the Ultimate Reality by saying that “we cannot tell which perspective is correct, because there is no ultimate perspective from which we can view the blind men” as they felt the elephant. Therefore, in the eyes of Hick, in the apprehension of the Truth, “we are all blind, trapped by our individual and cultural concepts”.<sup>116</sup> This implies that no divine Prophets could perceive the Ultimate Reality accurately and properly. According to the pluralistic hypothesis, as Keith E Yandell illustrates, the “Real is not anything described within any” of these religious traditions. It is understood to be “what is experienced by” all these traditions, and more.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> See also; Ian G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (london: SCM Press Ltd, 1972). 234.

<sup>114</sup> John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*, 4 ed. (New Jersey/London: Prentice-Hall, 1990). 117-8.

<sup>115</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 140.

<sup>116</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 224. It is interesting that Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan narrates a similar story from Buddha. He says that one day “the king of Benares” requested some congenital blinds to describe the elephant. One of them, feeling its leg by chance said, “the elephant was a tree trunk”. The second touching its tail reported that “the elephant was a like a rope”. The next, touching its ear, described the elephant as a “palm-leaf”. He concluded that in theological discourse we are like blind people “fighting with another”. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 2 ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1940). 308-9. See also; Hans Küng, *Does God Exist?*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: St Janes's Place, 1980). 607.

<sup>117</sup> Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion*. 73.

In sum, because each Prophet (and therefore religion) has faced the Reality from a different position, none of them can claim absolute truth or superiority over other Prophets. Therefore, the human experiences and perceptions of the one Real can be varied and plural.

Smith,<sup>118</sup> whose relationship with the followers of other religions led him to shape his thoughts on the issue of the diversity of religions,<sup>119</sup> is one of the staunch proponents of religious pluralism in the present century.<sup>120</sup> He, in the *Meaning and End of Religion*, proposes a new approach to religious traditions which Hick considers as “a modern classic of religious studies”.<sup>121</sup>

Since the issue of unity or diversity of religions logically depends on the nature of religion, Smith tries to clarify that nature first. He holds that it is hard to understand what the religion is, since it does not really correspond to “anything definite or distinctive in the objective world”.<sup>122</sup> It does not, however, mean that it is absolutely indeterminable. It is a “human phenomenon” whose roots can be “traced historically”.<sup>123</sup>

Smith does not see religion as “belief-systems” which could be judged as true or false. He believes that if we consider religions as “belief-systems”, we essentially “misrepresent the phenomena of faith”.<sup>124</sup> For the term religion, Smith substitutes “the twin concepts of faith and cumulative tradition”.<sup>125</sup> In other words, he divides religion “into the two hemispheres of faith and tradition”.<sup>126</sup> In the eyes of Smith, faith, which is the feature of human beings<sup>127</sup>, is “an inner religious experience” and living relation of people with the transcendent whether it is real or putative. By

---

<sup>118</sup> For Smith’s views I draw on this article for many of the sources in this chapter although I directly checked all of them. See; Hamid Nazari Pur, Qurban ‘Ilmi, and Mujtaba Zarvani, “Barrasi-yi Didgahha-yi Wilfred Cantwell Smith dar Mas’ali-yi Tanavvū-i Dini ” *Ilahiyyat-i Tatbighi* 16 (2016).

<sup>119</sup> Smith, *The Faith of Other*. 135.

<sup>120</sup> James C. Livingston, “Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 4, no. 3 (2003). 58.

<sup>121</sup> Hick, “Foreword.” V.

<sup>122</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (London: Fortress Press, 1991). 17.

<sup>123</sup> Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*. 110.

<sup>124</sup> Keith Ward, “Religion and the Question of Meaning,” in *The Meaning of the Life in the World Religions*, ed. Josef Runzo and Nancy M. Martin (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000). 11-2.

<sup>125</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 8; Ward, “Religion and the Question.” 12.

<sup>126</sup> Edward J. Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology for the World* (London: SMC Press LTD, 1986). 10.

<sup>127</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). 12.

“cumulative tradition”, he means the “entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community”. In other words, they are sets of doctrines, practices, symbols, scriptures, myths, ethical codes, and so on.<sup>128</sup>

These practices, beliefs, symbols and so on which form cumulative traditions are totally historical, but “history is not a closed system, since as agent within it stands man, his spirit in some degree open to the transcendent”. A cumulative tradition is the manifestation of the faith of previous generations. Since every person’s faith is new and different from the faith of others, the cumulative traditions are growing and building up. Consequently, a cumulative tradition, like other historical issues, is subjected to change.<sup>129</sup> To put it differently, the cumulative traditions are various sets of practices and beliefs that have been constructed and gathered by people in different generations and cultures.<sup>130</sup> Thus, in the eyes of Smith, the nature of cumulative traditions, like cultures, are extensive, complex, ever-developing and, consequently, evolving.

Faith, however, pertains to the inner experience of individuals. It is a “personal confrontation with the splendour and the love of God,”<sup>131</sup> and “man’s personal sense of the holy”.<sup>132</sup> Faith, according to Smith, describes “the inner, existential, and experimental” aspect of religion.<sup>133</sup> For him, faith has two features: it is varied, and it is not observable by others. I, therefore, cannot see my friend’s faith; rather, I can see the “expressions” of his faith. He states, “man’s faith finds expressions in many forms”.<sup>134</sup> In order to show how faith has varied expressions, Smith likens faith to love. Love can be manifested in the form of words - you are my beloved – and also in a variety forms of “behaviour, from holding the hand to composing a symphony,” and “yet love itself, is behind its expressions”.<sup>135</sup> He believes that “there is no ideal

---

<sup>128</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 156-7.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 161.

<sup>130</sup> Ward, "Religion and the Question." 12-3.

<sup>131</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 29.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>133</sup> Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology*. 10.

<sup>134</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 171.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 185-6.

faith,” it has varied in the course of centuries and will continue to vary.<sup>136</sup> In short, faith “is a living relation to the transcendent, and cumulative traditions are the constantly changing human conceptualizations of faith”.<sup>137</sup>

Smith, as it has been shown, does not believe in one true religion; rather, he supports the diversity of true religions. For him, religion is comprised of two hemispheres of cumulative tradition and faith, and both are varied. For Smith, therefore, true religion is varied.<sup>138</sup> He maintains that “religious truth” does not lie in a specific religion; rather, it depends on the quality of the faith. It lies “in persons”, not “in the religions”.<sup>139</sup> According to him, “there is no generic Christian faith” or “Buddhist faith”, but rather, “there is only my faith”, your faith and my Jewish friend’s faith. He states that we are all individuals classified in “mundane communities” with “mundane labels”. Each of us, nevertheless, is directly and personally encountering the transcendent reality. For God, “each of us is a person, not a type”.<sup>140</sup>

In the light of what has been mentioned above, Smith holds that, based on “actual observation”, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims “and others have known, and do know, God”.<sup>141</sup> These religious traditions “are channels through which God Himself comes into touch with” His creatures.<sup>142</sup> For Smith it is impossible that God shows Himself only in a specific tradition.<sup>143</sup> His views are one of the louder voices in establishing religious pluralism and rejecting exclusivism.

However, religious pluralism is not the controversy of Christian theologians only. As D’Costa correctly suggests, Hick also stimulated the pluralist scholars of other faiths to have similar discussions in their own religious debates.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Mohammad Hassan Khalil claims that the terminology of pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism may appear unfamiliar to “premodern and many modern Muslim scholars,” but it certainly helps them to draw a clear picture of the different approaches to Islam in

---

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 192.

<sup>137</sup> Ward, “Religion and the Question.” 12-3.

<sup>138</sup> Nazari Pur, ‘Ilmi, and Zarvani, “Barrasi-yi Didgahha-yi Wilfred Cantwell Smith.” 149.

<sup>139</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Questions of Religious Truth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967). 67.

<sup>140</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 191.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, *The Faith of Other*. 135.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. 136.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. 139.

<sup>144</sup> D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. 22.

terms of salvation.<sup>145</sup> Mahmut Aydin, for example, is a Muslim thinker who praises pluralism as a thoughtful and “practical response” to the fact of religious plurality in the world.<sup>146</sup> He believes that, based on this position, God provides equal opportunities of perfection to the adherents of all major traditions because “God is present” in all of them and looks over them.<sup>147</sup>

While some interpreters of the Qur'an give exclusivist interpretations<sup>148</sup> of such verses as “Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam”<sup>149</sup> and “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter,”<sup>150</sup> others offer pluralistic interpretations of them. It is probably due to the fact that, as Adnan states, these verses are *mutashabih* (ambiguous) that they may be interpreted to support both exclusivist and pluralist arguments.<sup>151</sup> Aydin, for instance, argues that the term *islam* is used in the Qur'an in order to denote “submission and self-surrendering of” one's own will “to God's will, God's authority and God's orders”,<sup>152</sup> and thus, the term ‘*muslim*’ in the Qur'an refers to all those who submit their will to God. It is a term that refers not only to those who are the followers of Prophet Muhammad but also to “Abraham,<sup>153</sup> the sons of Jacob”,<sup>154</sup> and the disciples of Jesus<sup>155</sup> as well as to those followers of these Prophets who submit to the Creator.<sup>156</sup> Aydin's reason for this argument is that “the Qur'an teaches that the true muslim is a person who submits and surrenders himself/herself to his Creator by not associating anybody or anything with Him”. In this way, Joseph's wish “to die as a ‘*muslim*’ in his prayer”<sup>157</sup> and Abraham's identification of himself as ‘*muslim*,’ do not mean their membership in “the institutionalized religion of the Prophet Muhammad” but their submission to Allah. Then, Aydin concludes

---

<sup>145</sup> Khalil, *Islam And the Fate of Others*. 7.

<sup>146</sup> Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 332.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 336.

<sup>148</sup> Al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil*, 2. 9. See also; Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, 1. 423 ; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, 2. 60.

<sup>149</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:19.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 3:85.

<sup>151</sup> Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. 192.

<sup>152</sup> Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 340.

<sup>153</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:67.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 2:133.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 3:52.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. 22:78.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 12:101.



that the term ‘*islam*’ and ‘*muslim*’ used in many verses of the Qur’an do not denote the “institutionalised religion of the Muslims” but submission to the power of God and obeying of His orders.<sup>158</sup> As we can see, with just a slight shift of understanding, Aydin provides a pluralistic view of these verses.

Mahmoud Ayoub is another Muslim thinker who attempts to prove that some Qur’anic verses explicitly affirm religious pluralism. Based on the verse “Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve”,<sup>159</sup> Ayoub holds that, on the Day of Judgment, the only “criterion of right and wrong, truth and falsehood and salvation or damnation” will be people’s faith in God not their affiliation to this or that religion.<sup>160</sup>

Responding to those who argue that this verse has been abrogated, he points to the fact that they were revealed to the Prophet twice. His point is that if the verse had been invalidated, they would not have been revealed again around the end of his life.<sup>161</sup> Thus, for Ayoub, whoever fulfils these three conditions properly, namely, belief in God, belief in the Last Day and righteous conduct, regardless of his or her affiliation to any particular religious tradition, can be saved. I will discuss Ayoub’s views in much more detail in chapter five.

Yusuf Ali, likewise, contends that from an Islamic perspective, “all Religion is one” because there is one Ultimate Truth. According to him, Muslims do not claim to have their own special religion.<sup>162</sup> Murad Wilfried Hofmann also claims that God continually announces that religious pluralism is the will of God. He adds that the verse “For each [community] among you we had appointed a code [of law] and a

---

<sup>158</sup> Mahmut Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths: A Muslim View," in *Islam and Inter-Faith Relations*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon and Perry Schmidt-Leukel (London: SCM Press, 2007). 45-6.

<sup>159</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:62 and 5:69.

<sup>160</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur’an and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition," in *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Orbis Books, 2007). 188.

<sup>161</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism," *Encounters: Journal of Intercultural Perspectives* 3 Part 2 (1997). 113.

<sup>162</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’an: Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corp, 1983).145.

path, and had Allah wished He would have made you one community, but [His purposes required] that He should test you in respect to what He has given you”<sup>163</sup> signifies religious pluralism. He concludes that these Qur’anic verses represent religious pluralism as helpful.<sup>164</sup>

‘Abdulkarim Soroush, in a similar fashion, claims that God was the first person to sow the seed of pluralism in the world of human beings. He argues that God manifested Himself to each Prophet in a different way, sent each of them to a certain region, inspired each of them with a certain interpretation, and in this way the furnace of pluralism was heated up.<sup>165</sup> Like Hick, he asks whether we are allowed to claim, as some Shi’ahs do, that, of billions of people, only a small minority of Shi’ah people are to be saved while the rest are considered as damned or whether a small minority of twelve million Jews reach salvation while the rest are rejected by God. If we accept such exclusivist claims, he asks, where is God’s guidance and universal grace to be found?<sup>166</sup> He believes that all followers of all religions follow the same single aim and are helped by the same source, but they call themselves and their ways with different names and, deluded by the illusion of disagreement, become hostile to each other.

Soroush holds that pluralism both makes for accepting the plurality of religions and provides each sect or religion with a reason to stay firm in its own beliefs.<sup>167</sup> He argues that the disagreement between Muslims, Christians and Jews is not a matter of truth and falseness, but a kind of discrepancy in Prophets’ points of view because the Ultimate Reality is the same for all of them, although each Prophet sees it from his own angle. In other words, there are three religions because God revealed himself to the three Prophets in three different ways. In this way, for Soroush, the difference between religions is not due to their different social milieu or possible distortions in them but due to the difference in divine revelations.<sup>168</sup> Soroush, as Rizvi truly states,

---

<sup>163</sup> *The Qur’an*. 5:48.

<sup>164</sup> Murad Wilfried Hofmann, "Religious Pluralism and Islam in a Polarised world," in *Islam and Global Dialogue : Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, ed. Roger Boase (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). 238-9.

<sup>165</sup> ‘Abdulkarim Soroush, *Siratha-yi Mustaqim* (Tehran: Sirat, 2005). 18.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.* 33.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* 32.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 13-4.

accepts Hick's hypothesis "based on the Kantian distinction between noumena and phenomena".<sup>169</sup>

Soroush also believes that the understanding of any text is necessarily plural. He says that the text is in need of interpretation by human beings and the meaning of the text depends on the interpreter's presuppositions, which are influenced by his culture. Since the presuppositions of interpreters are different, varied meanings and interpretations and, consequently, various schools of thoughts will emerge.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, the different beliefs, faiths and sects stem from the different interpretations of the text by scholars throughout history, and they can all be true.

Buddhist thinkers have also attended to the idea of pluralism. Rita M. Gross, for example, who was excommunicated at the age of twenty-one for rejecting the claim that the adherents of other religions go to hell, believes that "one deity created diversity as the most obvious fact about the world". She holds that "if the deity intended species and cultures to be distinctive and diverse, then why not religions?" She argues that according to a Buddhist analogy, religious teachings are like a raft which takes people to the shore. Thus, the raft is a means for journey and not the goal. For her, "religious teachings are not the ultimate or absolute truth; they are just pointers to the moon". She holds that pluralism has been accepted by the majority of Buddhists.<sup>171</sup> Likewise, the Indian Hindu mystic and saint, Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) holds that all religions are true although different nations call God by various names. He holds that each religious tradition is only a guide, leading its followers towards God. Religions are compared to rivers, which "come from different directions" but "ultimately become one in the one ocean".<sup>172</sup>

---

<sup>169</sup> Rizvi, "Oneself as the Saved Other?." 193.

<sup>170</sup> Soroush, *Siratha-yi Mustaqim*. 2-6.

<sup>171</sup> Rita M Gross, "Excuse Me, But What's the Problem? Isn't Religious Pluralism Normal?," in *The Myth of Religious Superiority: Multifaith Explorations of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Paul Knitter (New York: Orbis Books, 2005). 76, 78, 83.

<sup>172</sup> Sri Ramakrishna, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1957). 204. See also; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 144.

## **2.9 Conclusion**

The questions of religious diversity, the truth claims of faiths and the issue of salvation of the believers have been pondered by many theologians since a long time ago. Some Christian thinkers have proposed a triple classification for approaches to the truth claims of religions, that is to say, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Exclusivists hold that only their own religion is true and the followers of other religions, even if they are sincere and pious, cannot reach salvation. Inclusivists contend that only their own religion is true, but the followers of other religions may also attain salvation. Both maintain that there is only one true religion, but unlike exclusivists, inclusivists believe that the sincere followers of other faiths can reach felicity. Pluralists claim that all great religions are true and can offer paths to liberation or salvation. The adherents of such hypothesis maintain that exclusivism and inclusivism implicitly deny God's universal mercy and consequently deprive most of humankind of salvation. In other words, pluralists maintain that God is the God of all mankind, and He wants the eventual good for all His creatures. Although pluralism was born and developed in the West, it stimulated the thinkers of other religions, who attempt to reconcile such hypothesis with their sacred books and religious beliefs.

Since the aim of this thesis is to address the views of two contemporary Shi'ah Muslim thinkers, that is, Ayatollah Javadi and Professor Ayoub, it is appropriate to look at the historical attitudes of Shi'ah scholars in the past on the diversity of religions in the next chapter.

## 2 Chapter Two: A Brief History of Shi‘ah Attitudes to Religious Diversity

### 2.1 Introduction

Since the aim of this thesis is to address the views of two contemporary Shi‘ah Muslim thinkers regarding diversity of religions, it is appropriate to look at the historical attitude of the Shi‘ah scholars on such a diversity in the past. Both Ayoub and Javadi have emerged from a tradition which has a long history of theological debates and discussions, and naturally they have been impacted by that tradition as well as contributing new views and ideas to it. Thus, before addressing the viewpoints of Ayoub and Javadi, it is worth turning the reader’s attention to the concern of some Shi‘ah thinkers regarding religious diversity in the past. This chapter aims to highlight the views of some of the most prominent past Shi‘ah theologians on the subject of religious diversity to reveal part of the background to the discussions over this subject and to see where our two contemporary scholars stand with regards to those views.

The issue of the diversity of religions and religious pluralism, as discussed by Western scholars nowadays, has not been subjected to discussion by Muslim thinkers in the current form. However, it does not mean that they did not take the issue of previous religions and their commands into consideration at all. They have attempted to address it in theology (*kalam*)<sup>173</sup>, in law (*fiqh*) and in jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). Muslim theologians discuss this notion where they elaborate on “the unity of God” and “the necessity of prophethood”. Muslim jurists address it in the context of “*ahkam al-Kufr*” (the rulings of disbelief), *Jihad* (holy war), *taharat* (legal purity), *diyat* (blood money), and the marriage of Muslims with non-Muslims. Muslim jurisprudents discuss the issue of the previous religions in the sections entitled *naskh* (supersession), and *istishab al-sharayi‘ al-sabiqah* (presumption of continuity of the religious rulings of previous *shari‘ahs*).

---

<sup>173</sup> Martin J. McDermott maintains that theology is the nearest term for *kalam* in English. Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of Shaikh al-Mufid* (Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1986). 7. See also; *A New Dictionary of Religions*, ed. John R. Hinnells (Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1955). 255-6; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1976). 1, 4.

Obviously, it is not possible to introduce here all those discussions interspersed in different chapters of theology, law and jurisprudence. Thus, this chapter limits itself to look briefly at the works of three well-known Shi'ah scholars from three different disciplines, namely, al-Shaykh al-Tusi (d. 1067), Sadr al-Din Shirazi (d. 1640) and al-Shaykh al-Ansari (d. 1864). These three scholars have been chosen for this study for the following reasons:

A- They are the most prominent in their fields and provide different perspectives. Each of the three thinkers attempts to deal with the diversity of religions from different angles. Al-Tusi was the founder of Najaf seminary about a thousand years ago and is arguably the architect of Shi'ah theology and law as we know them today. He is the author of two of the four canonical books of Shi'ah law and hadith. His views in law and jurisprudence were not challenged for over a century after his death. He has an almost comprehensive approach to the issue where he tries to address it with theological, exegetical and jurisprudential arguments.

Sadr al-Din is the founder of transcendental philosophy. His philosophical school is now the dominant school of philosophy among Shi'ah philosophers and by and large has replaced theology in Shi'ah circles. As a distinguished philosopher, Sadr al-Din has a philosophical approach to the question of religious diversity.

Al-Ansari is admittedly the renovator of Shi'ah jurisprudence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is the master of all contemporary Shi'ah jurist, and his books of law and jurisprudence are studied and analysed meticulously in Qum and Najaf seminaries. As expected, he analysed religious diversity in a jurisprudential fashion.

B- These three Muslim thinkers have been chosen from three different geographical areas and had an effective influence on the Shi'ah school in Baghdad, Isfahan and Najaf, respectively.

C- These three scholars have been chosen from three different periods of Shi‘ah history, that is to say, the eleventh, the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, respectively.

All in all, these three thinkers played a great role in the formation of Shi‘ah thought and are profoundly respected in their respective fields. The concern of this chapter, therefore, will be a short investigation of the intellectual and theological arguments put forward by these three scholars.

## 2.2 Al-Shaykh al-Tusi

### 2.2.1 Biography

Abu Ja‘far Muhammad Ibn Hasan al-Tusi, known as Shaykh al-Ta‘ifih (head of the sect) and Shaykh al-Imamiyyah (head of the Imami School of Thought), was born in Tus in the north east of Iran in the year 994. Having finished preliminary religious education, he moved to the seminary of Baghdad in the year 1017. He benefited from the lectures of very eminent scholars such as al-Shaykh al-Mufid (948-1022) for five years and al-Sayyid al-Murtada (965-1044) for twenty-three years. After the death of al-Sayyid al-Murtada, he assumed the leadership of the Shi‘ah community.<sup>174</sup> With over fifty valuable and creative books on exegesis, theology, jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence, he was one of the most prolific Shi‘ah writers.<sup>175</sup> He compiled all his books when he was in Baghdad, with the exclusion of *Ma‘rifat al-Rijal* (known as *Rijal al-Kashshi*) and *al-Amali*.

Al-Tusi produced new and creative works in almost all disciplines of religious knowledge. His valuable book, *Tahdhib al-Ahkam*, in jurisprudence, was published when he was still young;<sup>176</sup> nevertheless, the work established itself as one of the four canonical books of Shi‘ah jurisprudents. His *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an* was

---

<sup>174</sup> Muhammad Rida Ansari, "Foreword," in *‘Uddah al-Usul* (Qum: Sitarih, 1997). 24.

<sup>175</sup> Ja‘far Sobhani, *Mu‘jam al-Tabaqat al-Mutakallimin*, 5 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Mu‘assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2002). 235.

<sup>176</sup> Aqa Buzurg Tehrani, *al-Dhari‘ah ila Tasanif al-Shi‘ah*, 26 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1983). 504.

amongst his final works.<sup>177</sup> He was the first Shi‘ah scholar to interpret the whole Qur‘an<sup>178</sup> in a rational and analytical manner with a tint of theological approach.<sup>179</sup> In the realm of law and jurisprudence, his *al-Mabsut fi Fiqh al-Imamiyyah* was a full and comprehensive series of Shi‘ah legal and devotional decrees, while his *al-Khilaf* was a comparative study of jurisprudence amongst different schools of law. *Tamhid al-Usul* and *al-Iqtisad fima Yat‘allaq bi al-I‘tiqad* are some precious works which al-Tusi left us in the realm of theology. After the surrendering of Baghdad to the Seljuk Empire in the year 1054, al-Tusi moved to Najaf and died there in 1067.<sup>180</sup>

### 2.2.2 The *Shari‘ah* of Prophet Muhammad before Islam

One of the topics which used to be discussed in Islamic theology and is somehow related to religious pluralism was the devotional practice of Prophet Muhammad before his divine mission started. The question was what religion the Prophet used to practise before his appointment. He was appointed as a Messenger of God in the city of Mecca at the age of forty.<sup>181</sup> Before his prophethood, according to renowned Muslim historians, the Prophet and his ancestors worshipped God and never worshiped or prostrated before idols.<sup>182</sup> But the important question that engaged the minds of Muslim theologians was the *shari‘ah* that the Prophet followed before his prophethood. In other words, they ask, how did he perform his religious duties such as prayer and fasting? Did he follow the *shari‘ah* of previous Prophets such as Moses or Jesus or did he have a different code of practice?

As a theologian, al-Tusi attempted to answer this question. He reports that some theologians hold that the Prophet practised his religious duties according to the *shari‘ah* of the previous prophets. According to al-Tusi, they base their opinion on

<sup>177</sup> Muhammad Ibn Idris, *al-Sar‘ir al-Hawiy ila Tahrir al-Fatawi*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Islamic Publication Institute, 1989). 563.

<sup>178</sup> Muhammad Safar Jibri‘ili, *Siyr-i Tatavvur-i Kalam-i Shi‘ah az ‘Asr-i Ghiybat ta Khajah Nasir al-Din-i Tusi* (Qum: Pazhuhishgah-i Farhangi-yi va Andishi-yi Islami, 2010). 255.

<sup>179</sup> Muhammad Husein Tabataba‘i, *Qur‘an dar Islam* (Qum: Bustan-i Kitab, 2009). 76.

<sup>180</sup> Aqa Buzurg Tehrani mentions seventy-eight sources for the biography of al-Tusi. Aqa Buzurg Tehrani, "Foreword," in *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an*, ed. Ahmad Habib Qasir (Beirut: Dar al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1988). 64-73.

<sup>181</sup> ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah, 1995). 233.

<sup>182</sup> Ja‘far Sobhani, *Furugh-i Abadiyyat* (Qum: Bustan-i Kitab, 2004). 204-5.



some Qur'anic verses such as "They are the ones whom Allah has guided. So follow their guidance"<sup>183</sup> and "We sent down the Torah containing guidance and light. The Prophets, who had submitted, judged by it".<sup>184</sup> Moreover, they seized upon the hadith that Prophet Muhammad, in a case involving the stoning of an adulterer, had been following the religious ruling of the Old Testament. However, these arguments do not convince al-Tusi. He holds that since Prophet Muhammad was superior to all previous Prophets, it is not rationally conceivable that he followed their *shari'ahs*, which were lower than his. Moreover, he abrogated the previous *shari'ahs*; therefore, he could not have practiced his religious duties according to those *shari'ahs*.<sup>185</sup> This viewpoint implies that he had received his *shari'ah* (at least part of it) before the age of forty via inspiration from God.<sup>186</sup> It seems that al-Tusi might have relied upon some narrations that indicated that the Prophet was trained and supervised by angels before prophethood.<sup>187</sup> This view can be supported by some Qur'anic verses reporting that Prophet Jesus also received the message of God when he was in the cradle.<sup>188</sup> Hence, from the above-mentioned points, al-Tusi contends, it should be clear that Prophet Muhammad did not perform his religious duties according to the *shari'ahs* of the previous Prophets.

### 2.2.3 The Meaning of Islam

The attention that al-Tusi has paid to the previous *shari'ahs* can be perceived in his commentary on the Qur'an. The terms "Islam" and "Muslim" have been mentioned more than fifty times in the Qur'an. Finding the accurate meaning of them is one of the preoccupations of commentators in the course of Islamic history. Some exegetes give a general meaning for Islam in the verse "Indeed, with Allah religion is *islam*".<sup>189</sup> They argue that it refers to the teachings of all Prophets and, in this way, Islam is the name of all revealed religions from Adam to Muhammad. Al-Tusi, however, attempts to present a different interpretation of the term *islam*. He believes

---

<sup>183</sup> *The Qur'an*. 6:90.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.* 5:44.

<sup>185</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *Uddah al-Usul*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Sitarih, 1997). 590-5.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* 295-6.

<sup>187</sup> Muhammad Al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah* (Tehran: Uswah li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 1994). 406.

<sup>188</sup> *The Qur'an*. 19:30-1.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.* 3:19.

that the term *din* (religion), in the above-mentioned verse, signifies obedience, and the term Islam, although literally meaning submission to God, does not denote all revealed religions. In the eyes of al-Tusi, it refers to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad only, and Islam is the only true religion. He attempts to prove his exclusivist interpretation of the term *islam* by reference to various verses. Al-Tusi holds that, when the verse “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him”<sup>190</sup> was revealed, a group of the Jews claimed that they were Muslim. The Jews were asked to perform Hajj (the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) to prove their claim because the Qur’an states that “it is the duty of mankind toward Allah to make pilgrimage to the House”.<sup>191</sup> Since they did not perform Hajj, they showed that they were not Muslims. Moreover, drawing on the Qur’anic reference to ‘the approved religion’,<sup>192</sup> al-Tusi asserts that the institutionalized teachings of Prophet Muhammad constitute the only true religion.<sup>193</sup> According to the verse “Indeed, with Allah religion is *Islam*”,<sup>194</sup> he claims that Islam and *Iman* (faith) are synonymous. Thus, a necessary corollary of this notion is that whoever accepts the teachings of Prophet Muhammad is Muslim and otherwise he will be considered as a *kafir* (disbeliever).<sup>195</sup>

Al-Tusi attempts to look at the previous religions from other angles, too. According to the verse, “nor practice the true religion”,<sup>196</sup> he believes that they cannot be true religions now. He substantiates his claim by referring to some verses pointing out that Islam abrogated the previous religions. Moreover, in the light of the verse, “amongst the Jews those who pervert words from their meanings”,<sup>197</sup> he adds that the previous Books were subjected to interpolation and alteration.<sup>198</sup> Considering these two points, it seems that the validity of the previous religions in the eyes of al-Tusi is doubted.

---

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. 3:85.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. 3:97. See, Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, 10 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1988). 538.

<sup>192</sup> *The Qur’an*. 24: 55.

<sup>193</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, 10 vols., vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1988). 455.

<sup>194</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:19.

<sup>195</sup> Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 2. 418-9 and 520-1. See also; *ibid.*, 5. 455.

<sup>196</sup> *The Qur’an*. 9:29.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. 4:46 and 5:14.

<sup>198</sup> Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 5. 202-3.

Although al-Tusi insists that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad represent the only true religion<sup>199</sup>, he believes that, according to some Qur'anic verses,<sup>200</sup> those who do not receive Islam or are unable to comprehend it will be saved.<sup>201</sup> Thus, for al-Tusi, while Islam is the only true religion, non-Muslims, too, might receive salvation.

#### 2.2.4 Muslims and the Followers of Other Religions

Al-Tusi, in his jurisprudential work, attempts to address the religious rulings of Muslims regarding the followers of other religions. Since the subject matter of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) is the religious responsibility of individuals, the jurist should try to clarify the practical and behavioural duties of Muslims towards disbelievers.<sup>202</sup> Although al-Tusi believes that a Muslim should reject other religions,<sup>203</sup> he espouses normative religious pluralism in treating disbelievers. He divides non-Muslims into six categories: Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, idol-worshippers, hypocrites, apostates and incapables. He holds that, except for the apostates, the life, honour and properties of all these groups should be preserved and respected by Muslims on condition that they pay Islamic tax (*jizyah*). He adds that they, like Muslim citizens, should receive blood-money if they are injured or are killed.<sup>204</sup>

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it can be concluded that al-Tusi presents an exclusivist interpretation of the Qur'an; that is to say, the only acceptable religion is the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. However, he insists that Muslims should have peaceful relations with the adherents of other traditions.

As observed, as a jurist and a theologian, al-Tusi has treated the question from legal and exegetical perspectives. Now we turn to Sadr al-Din to see how as a philosopher-exegete he has approached the question.

---

<sup>199</sup> Ibid. 209.

<sup>200</sup> *The Qur'an*. 4:97-9 and 17:15.

<sup>201</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 10 vols., vol. 3 (Beirut Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988). 202.

<sup>202</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Mabsut fi al-Fiqh al-Imamiyyah*, 8 vols., vol. 4 (Qum: Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, 1967). 79, 112, 120 and 220. See also; *ibid.*, 7. 156-7.

<sup>203</sup> Al-Tusi, *al-Mabsut*, 7. 287.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. 156-7. See also; Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Mabsut fi al-Fiqh al-Imamiyyah*, 8 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, 1067). 9-13.

## **2.3 Sadr al-Din Shirazi**

### **2.3.1 Biography**

Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim, known as Sadr al-Din and Mulla Sadra, was born in Shiraz in 1572. His life can be divided into three different phases. In the first period of formal and normal education, Sadr al-Din started his elementary education in Shiraz, which was the heart of Islamic philosophy and traditional studies before the emergence of the Safavid dynasty (1501-1722). From the beginning, he displayed his intelligence and became the master of transmitted and intellectual sciences. As he grew in knowledge, the scientific atmosphere of Shiraz did not satisfy his curious soul anymore and he moved to Isfahan, which was the most important centre of philosophy and intellectual sciences in Iran and perhaps “the whole Islamic East”. Sadr al-Din was influenced by very prominent thinkers like al-Shaykh al-Baha’i (1547-1621), Mir Damad (d.1631) and perhaps Mir al-Findiriski (1562- 1640). Isfahan gratified Sadr al-Din’s inquisitive soul in such a way that he even “surpassed his teachers” and became an authority in the field of Islamic thought.

The second period of his life is that of self-purification. Having learned a formal knowledge from prominent teachers, Sadr al-Din, in order to develop his intellectual personality, left Isfahan to “devote himself to a life of asceticism and inner purification”. He held that “spiritual training” was a vital condition for those who are keen to achieve the “Divine Mysteries” and “Divine Science”. He, therefore, left the “cosmopolitan centre of Isfahan” for the small village of Kahak near the religious city of Qum. He maintained that the needs of the thoughtful soul for a “direct encounter with the spiritual world” could only be satisfied in solitude. He received “spiritual vision through the spiritual discipline of invocation and meditation”. In the light of spiritual activity and meditation in the solitude of Kahak, Sadr al-Din became an “illuminated sage” in such a way that for him “metaphysics had turned from intellectual understanding to direct vision”.

The third part of his life was occupied by teaching. Having purified his soul in the secluded village of Kahak, Sadr al-Din returned to his birthplace, Shiraz, to start

teaching. He compiled many of his contemplative thoughts there. His great spiritual and scientific presence in Shiraz attracted the scholars “from near and far” and the city became a significant cradle for Islamic education again. In the third part of his life, which took thirty years, in addition to writing and teaching, Sadr al-Din went on a pilgrimage to Mecca several times on foot. Returning from his last spiritual journey to Mecca, he died in Basra in 1640 and was buried there.

Nearly all the Sadr al-Din’s works belong to the third phase of his life. He compiled more than fifty books that are of intellectual merit. *Al- Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah fi al-Asfar al- ‘aqliyyah al- ‘arba’ah* (*The Transcendent Theosophy concerning the Four Intellectual Journeys of the Soul*), usually known as *al-Asfar* (*Journeys*), is one of his masterpieces in the realm of intellectual sciences in nine volumes. This book is considered as the “final work” of the Islamic philosophy so far. *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah fi al-Manahij al-Sulukiyyah* (*Divine Witnesses concerning the Paths of Spiritual Realization*) is another of his masterpieces that were compiled from a gnostic approach. Almost all his thoughts have been summarized in this book.<sup>205</sup>

### 2.3.2 The True Religion

Sadr al-Din, based on the Qur’anic verses and other authentic texts, holds that there is only one true religion. He believes that man has always been in need of prophetic guidance<sup>206</sup> and in the light of this guidance, he can attain salvation.<sup>207</sup> He adds that

<sup>205</sup> Hossein Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works* (Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978). 31-53. I have summarized the biography of Sadr Al-Din from this book. For more information about his biography, see, Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (London/New York: Kegan Paul International, 2006). 342-5; Muhammad Kamal, *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2006). 24-40; Hossein Ziai, "Mulla Sadra: His Life and Works," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London/New York: Routledge, 1996). 635-642; Hossein Nasr, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993). 82-3.

<sup>206</sup> Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *al-Hikmah al-Muta’aliyah fi al-Asfar al- ‘Aqliyyah al-Arba’ah*, 9 vols., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1981). 205; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah fi al-Manahij al-Sulukiyyah* (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishqah, 1981). 372; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Asrar al-Ayat* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat, 1981). 190.

<sup>207</sup> Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 4 vols., vol. 2 (Tehran: Mu’assasa-yi Mutali’at va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 2004). 390-5.

the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad is true and the most perfect religion.<sup>208</sup> He believes that the phrase “straight path” in the verse, O Muhammad “you are indeed one of the apostles, on a straight path. [It is a scripture] sent down gradually from the All-mighty, the All-merciful”<sup>209</sup> refers to Qur’anic teachings.<sup>210</sup> Sadr al-Din maintains the belief that only through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad can man come to know God. He holds that even one thousand proofs and pieces of evidence cannot lead man to appreciate God as He is. In other words, only Prophet Muhammad can describe Him. He adds that all the prophets were covenanted to believe in Prophet Muhammad and were obliged to instruct their followers to believe and support him.<sup>211</sup> Stressing that the Prophet’s *shari'ah* is a great blessing from God, he adds that whoever obeys him will be guided and whoever ignores his teachings will go astray.<sup>212</sup> He states that all humankind should accept the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>213</sup> Referring to the words of the Prophet “whoever sees me surely sees the truth”, Sadr al-Din believes that the Prophet is infallible, and obeying him is obeying Allah.<sup>214</sup> Prophet Muhammad, in the eyes of Sadr al-Din, has been given preference over all other Prophets.<sup>215</sup> Based on the Prophetic hadith, “I am leaving two precious things, the Qur’an and my household. You will never go astray as long as you adhere to both of them”,<sup>216</sup> Sadr al-Din holds that Muhammad’s successors are infallible, too. He adds that we must obey them and that their guidance is the source of human salvation.<sup>217</sup> Considering these points, we may conclude that, for Sadr al-Din, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad is the only true religion, and therefore, in terms of the debate on religious truthfulness and validity, Sadr al-Din is an exclusivist.

<sup>208</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 373; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Tehran: Mu’assasa-yi Mutali’at va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 2004). 78, 567; *ibid.*, 2. 458.

<sup>209</sup> *The Qur’an*. 36:2-5.

<sup>210</sup> Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Karim*, 7 vols., vol. 5 (Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987). 19-20.

<sup>211</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 1. 219. See also; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-Karim*, 7 vols., vol. 4 (Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987). 400-1.

<sup>212</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 371.

<sup>213</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 1. 233.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. 569.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* 500.

<sup>216</sup> ‘Abdullah Al-Darimi, *Sunan al-Darimi*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Damascus: Maktab al-Hadithah, 1930). 432; Abu al-Husein Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 8 vols., vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d). 122-3.

<sup>217</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 2. 500-1

### 2.3.3 Validity and Salvation

The issue of the legitimacy of other religions and the salvation of the adherents of other faiths has always been one of the preoccupations of theologians. As we saw before, the exclusivists hold that there is only one true religion and consequently only the followers of this true religion would attain salvation. It means that even the sincere followers of other faiths cannot attain salvation.<sup>218</sup> According to exclusivists, there is a strong relation between salvation and the true religion.<sup>219</sup> Pluralists, on the other hand, believe that “different religions manifested different responses to the divine Reality”, and therefore, all the major religions are true and can “facilitate salvation”.<sup>220</sup> They argue that it is impossible to assume that God presents the true religion to a small minority<sup>221</sup> and that such an assumption would ignore God’s mercy to all mankind.<sup>222</sup> The salvation of the adherents of religions, somehow, implies the truthfulness of their religions.

Sadr al-Din, however, distinguishes between the true religion and salvation. He holds that although the majority of the followers of religions will be saved, the true religion is restricted to one of them.<sup>223</sup> In contrast to the belief of exclusivists, Sadr al-Din distinguishes between validity and salvation and maintains that most human beings, even though not benefiting from the truth and the right teachings, would be saved. However, this salvation never implies the plurality of truth and the veracity of their beliefs.<sup>224</sup>

Sadr al-Din believes that God’s aim in sending the divine Books is to teach religious beliefs (in man’s origin and his end) and religious practice (good work). Heartfelt

---

<sup>218</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 31.

<sup>219</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 222.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 223.

<sup>221</sup> Hick, "Foreword." vi.

<sup>222</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005".

<sup>223</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 375; Murtada Huseini et al., "Nisbat-i Nijat va Haqqaniyyat az Nazar-i Mulla Sadra va John Hick," *Falsafi-yi Islami* 12 (2013). 33. I draw on this article for many of the sources in this section although I directly checked all them.

<sup>224</sup> Murtada Huseini and Ruhullah Ziynali, "Rastigari-yi Kithratgara va Rabiti-yi an ba Haqqaniyyat az Didgah-i Sadr al-Muta'allihin," *Falsafi-yi Din* 1 (2012). 114. I also draw on this article for many of the sources in this section, but I directly checked all them.

beliefs and fulfilment of good work are the source of humanity's salvation.<sup>225</sup> He stresses that the *shari'ah* and good work play an effective role in the salvation in such a way that prophethood without a *shari'ah* seems like a body without a soul.<sup>226</sup> In the eyes of Sadr al-Din, Muhammad's teachings represent the only perfect and true religion.<sup>227</sup> In the light of what has been mentioned above, it can be concluded, according to Sadr al-Din's point of view, that the proper and perfect truth is confined to Prophet Muhammad's teachings, which everybody should follow. However, those who have sincerely attempted to achieve the truth but have failed to reach it would also be saved.<sup>228</sup> It seems that, for him, sincerity and purity of heart plays a great role in salvation but not in attaining the truth. Sadr al-Din maintains that even those who worship Allah but have a wrong comprehension of His unity (*Tawhid*) and not all their beliefs lead to the truth are considered as monotheistic, since they truly worship the transcendent God.<sup>229</sup> He affirms that whoever inwardly submits to God, although they may have misinterpreted the divine teachings, would be saved since the submission and servitude to God can be the source of salvation.<sup>230</sup>

From Sadr al-Din's perspective, even the idol-worshippers who inwardly worship the transcendent God would be rewarded.<sup>231</sup> Therefore, those who have not received the divine message of God would be given an award on condition that they have performed good work in the world.<sup>232</sup> Here the question might arise as to how such people can recognize good work while they have not received any message from God. In response to this question, it should be noted that, according to the perspective of Sadr al-Din, God has provided two types of messenger for the guidance of mankind, namely, the external Prophets such as Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and the internal prophet; that is, the inner light that can lead a man

---

<sup>225</sup> Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*, 7 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987). 454.

<sup>226</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 364; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *al-Mazahir al-Ilahiyyah fi Asrar al-'Ulum al-Kamaliyyah* (Tehran: Bunyad-i Hikmat-i Sadra, 1997). 147.

<sup>227</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 375.

<sup>228</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 2. 64.

<sup>229</sup> Vahidih Fakhkhar Nughani, "Tahlil-i Didgah-i Mulla Sadra dar Mizan-i Ta'thir-i Sidq-i Bavarha-yi Dini dar Nijat-i Insanha," *Hikmat-i Sadra'i*, no. 2 (2014). 86. I draw on this article for many of the sources in this section, but I directly checked all of them. Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *Iqaz al-Na'imin* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat-i Iran, 1982). 69.

<sup>230</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 144.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. 144.

<sup>232</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 3. 454.



towards the Truth. Therefore, if someone follows the call from his primordial human nature (*fitrah*), he will be rewarded.<sup>233</sup> He states that God created the intrinsic nature of human beings in such a way that it can accept the right faith and Truth. He adds, however, that the inner light is susceptible to sins.<sup>234</sup> Thus, according to Sadr al-Din, whoever sincerely attempts to achieve the Truth will be saved even if he could not reach it. Sadr al-Din takes a daring step to contend that even those who do not attempt to reach the Truth will be granted His mercy, providing that their dereliction does not stem from pride and enmity.<sup>235</sup> Referring to the viewpoint of Avicenna, he states that the purport of intellectual and traditional arguments implies that the majority of mankind will attain salvation.<sup>236</sup>

In the last part of this chapter, in order to complete our survey of the historical standpoints of the three renowned Shi'ah thinkers in the past, I will discuss the thoughts of the third prominent scholar, Murtada al-Ansari.

## 2.4 Al-Shaykh Al-Ansari

### 2.4.1 Biography

Al-Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari was born in 1799 in Dizful (in the south-west of Iran) in a religious family.<sup>237</sup> Having finished his elementary education in Arabic grammar and jurisprudence in 1816, he moved to Iraq (Karbala and Najaf). He studied the science and principles of jurisprudence with some renowned scholars such as al-Sayyid al-Mujahid (1766-1827) and Sharif al-'Ulama (1760-1829). After completing the higher levels of his studies, he returned to Iran in 1824. Al-Ansari, in order to further his education, visited well-known scholars in Isfahan, Brujird, Mashhad and Kashan. In Kashan, he greatly benefited from the lectures of Ahmad al-Naraq

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 1. 445; Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 2.389, 463 and 505; ibid., 4. 386-7; ibid., 1. 363.

<sup>234</sup> Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*, 9 vols., vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1981). 24; Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 3. 343.

<sup>235</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 2. 64.

<sup>236</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah*, 7. 79-80.

<sup>237</sup> Khayr al-Din Al-Zarkuli, *al-A'lam*, 8 vols., vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm al-Mala'in, 1980). 201.

(1771-1829) for four years. He thus made use of and gained knowledge from the five important centres of Shi‘ah learning.<sup>238</sup>

Having stayed in Iran for six years, he moved to Najaf again in 1830 to disseminate his profound thoughts. About four hundred diligent students, as Muhsin al-Amin (1867-1951) claims, attended his lectures.<sup>239</sup> At that time, when al-Shaykh Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi (1785-1849) was the head, the acclaimed master of *fiqh* in Iraq, al-Ansari was chosen by him to lead the seminary of Najaf and as his successor as the highest authority in Islamic law. He took the responsibility for Shi‘ahs as a leader and was an authoritative source of knowledge for fifteen years. He died in 1864.<sup>240</sup>

The Qur’an, hadiths, intellect (*‘aql*) and consensus (*ijma’*), according to Shi‘ah jurists, are the fourfold sources of Islamic jurisprudence. Religious rulings can be deduced from these sources “in accordance with particular conditions clarified in the science of jurisprudence”.<sup>241</sup> Al-Ansari attempted to revamp the science and the principles of jurisprudence in the light of these sources. He produced valuable works, mostly in the science of jurisprudence and its principles. *Fara’id al-Usul* (in the principles of jurisprudence) and *al-Makasib* (in law) are his most important works which are still used as textbooks in Shi‘ah seminaries. His creative thoughts opened new horizons in jurisprudence and its principles. Ascribing a great value to the role of the reason in deducing religious rulings, he marginalized the traditionalists and the hadith-centred jurists (*akhbari* approach).

Although al-Ansari did not write any theological books, his jurisprudential publications on the principles of *fiqh* show his expertise in theology. In the course of his jurisprudential discussions, he attempted to expound on some theological issues. Due to lack of means of communication, al-Ansari, did not have the opportunity to correspond with the heads of other faiths and did not engage in interfaith dialogue

---

<sup>238</sup> Ja‘far Sobhani, *Tadhkirah al-A‘yan* (Qum: Mu‘assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1997). 369-373.

<sup>239</sup> Muhsin Al-Amin, *A‘yan al-Shi‘ah*, 10 vols., vol. 10 (Beirut: Dar al-Ta‘aruf, 1983). 118.

<sup>240</sup> Sobhani, *Tadhkirah al-A‘yan*. 373; Ja‘far Sobhani, *Mawsu‘ah Tabaqat al-Fuqaha*, 15 vols., vol. 13 (Qum: Mu‘assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1997). 656.

<sup>241</sup> Ja‘far Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi‘i Islam: A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices*, trans. Reza Shah-Kazami (London/New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2001). 182.

with the followers of other religions. However, he propounded some relevant ideas regarding previous religions and the religious duties of Muslims concerning them.

#### 2.4.2 The Concept of *Din* and Islam

Al-Ansari presents an exclusivist interpretation of the verse “Indeed, with Allah religion is *Islam*”.<sup>242</sup> He believed that the term “Islam” in the verse refers to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad only. He concludes that even a partial rejection of the Prophet’s teachings would amount to forsaking the religion of Islam. Al-Ansari, in the light of some narrations such as “whoever commits a great sin believing that it is permissible it makes him leave Islam,”<sup>243</sup> affirms that whoever denies the essential axioms of Islamic teachings will be considered as a disbeliever (*kafir*).<sup>244</sup> It seems that the salvation of non- Muslims, in the eyes of al-Ansari, will be doubtful.

#### 2.4.3 The Concept of the People of the Book

The concern of al-Ansari about the followers of the previous *shari‘ahs* can be perceived in the controversial discussion about the ritual cleanness or uncleanness (*taharat* or *najasat*) of Jews’ and Christians’ bodies. The Qur’an says,

the Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah," and the Christians say, "Christ is the son of Allah." That is an opinion that they mouth, imitating the opinions of the faithless of former times.... They have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary's son; though they were commanded to worship only the One God.<sup>245</sup>

Al-Ansari, in the light of these verses, holds that since Jews and Christians consider Ezra and Christ as partners with God, they are polytheists. Although the Qur’an considers polytheists as ritually unclean (*najas*)<sup>246</sup>, al-Ansari holds that it refers to idol worshipers in the time of Prophet Muhammad not to Jews and Christians. Since human beings are naturally clean, and we do not have any authentic evidence for their ritual uncleanness/impurity, he preliminarily tends to believe in their

---

<sup>242</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:19

<sup>243</sup> Muhammad Hurr al-‘Amili, *Wasa’il al-Shi‘ah*, 30 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu’assasah Al al-bayt, 1988). 33.

<sup>244</sup> Murtada Al-Ansari, *Kitab al-Taharah*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (Qum: Majma‘ al-Fikr al-Islami, 2006). 134-42.

<sup>245</sup> *The Qur’an*. 9:30-1.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.* 9:28.

cleanliness/purity. Nevertheless, he ultimately supports the consensus (*ijma'*) of the Shi'ah jurists who prefer the uncleanness of the People of the Book.<sup>247</sup>

#### 2.4.4 Islam and Previous Religions

The teachings of the Prophets can be divided into two categories of belief (*usul al-din*) and practice (*furu' al-din*). In terms of religious beliefs, al-Ansari believes that all the Prophets, as the Qur'an claims, proclaim the same religious beliefs.<sup>248</sup> "Belief in the reality of God" and in the necessity of the hereafter are commonly espoused by all divinely revealed religions.<sup>249</sup> In other words, all the Prophets, from first to last, share the same basic teachings, and therefore, the Prophets never abrogated the religious beliefs of the previous Prophets. However, in terms of religious practice or *shari'ahs*, there are some differences between the divine Books (*shari'ahs*). In other words, these books, while retaining their basic teachings, have presented somewhat different religious laws and practices according to the capabilities of the people in the course of history.

If we compare the religious rulings of two *shari'ahs*, it cannot escape our notice that one of the following three conditions is applicable. Firstly, some religious practices in both *shari'ahs* are the same. There is a certain belief that a religious practice that was compulsory in the previous *shari'ah* is also compulsory in the new *shari'ah*. As the Qur'an says: "O you who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you".<sup>250</sup> Secondly, some religious practices in the two *shari'ahs* are very different. For example, a particular act, such as eating the meat of a particular animal that was an illicit action in the previous *shari'ah* is not forbidden in Islam. The Qur'an says, "To the Jews we forbade every animal having an undivided hoof, and of oxen and sheep we forbade them their fat, except what is borne by their backs or the entrails or what is attached to the bones".<sup>251</sup> However,

---

<sup>247</sup> Al-Ansari, *Kitab al-Taharah*, 5. 99-108.

<sup>248</sup> *The Qur'an*. 42:13.

<sup>249</sup> Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 27&120.

<sup>250</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:183. For instance, the blood ransom is compulsory in Islam and previous *shari'ah*. Ibid. 5: 45.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 5:146.

Prophet Muhammad abrogated that prohibition and made it a permissible act.<sup>252</sup> Thirdly, some religious practices of one *shari'ah* are clear while they are unknown to the preceding one.

Al-Ansari attempts to discuss this issue from a jurisprudential perspective. He says one of the means by which religious rulings can be deduced by a jurist is *istishab* (presumption of continuity). If a jurist is certain that a particular act was obligatory in the past but doubts whether it is still obligatory or not, he could presume that it is still obligatory. Friday prayer, for instance, was compulsory in the time of Prophet Muhammad and his successors. However, the jurist is not certain whether it is an obligation in the time of the occultation of the twelfth Imam as well. The uncertainty of the jurist stems from lack of some conditions that may play an essential role in such an obligation. In other words, the obligation of Friday prayers may depend on the presence of the Prophet or his successors. However, in the light of the principle of *istishab* the jurist can presume that the obligation of performing Friday prayer continues.

Al-Ansari goes a step further and says that even if a jurist is certain that a particular religious act was compulsory in the previous *shari'ah*, but he does not find any authentic evidence signifying its legal status in Islam, he can deduce, via the principle of *istishab*, that it is compulsory in Islam as well. In the light of what has been mentioned above, it can be concluded that the religious rulings of the previous *shari'ah* can be a source upon which a Muslim jurist can rely on the condition that he cannot find any authentic evidence in Islamic sources indicating otherwise.

He concludes that as long as there is no supporting ground for the abrogation of a specific legal ruling in the previous *shari'ah*, the jurist, using *istishab*, can abide by the religious rulings of the previous *shari'ah*. Moreover, al-Ansari attempts to support his viewpoint by drawing on Muslims' conventional practice. He says that Muslims in the time of Prophet Muhammad used to practise and follow the religious

---

<sup>252</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Amali* (Qum: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1993). 484. See also; Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 111 vols., vol. 16 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982). 323; *ibid.*, 89. 14.

acts of the previous *shari'ah* unless they received a new law. The Prophet never opposed the legitimacy of such general practice of Muslims.<sup>253</sup>

In view of the above points, it could be seen that the religious rulings of previous *shari'ahs* have always been given serious attention by the Shi'ah jurists. In their view, there is a strong connection between the religious practices of previous prophets and the Islamic *shari'ah*. Perhaps, Coward Harold explains the same link when he states that Muhammad's teachings are the "continuation and fulfilment of Jewish and Christian biblical tradition".<sup>254</sup>

## 2.5 Conclusion

In order to understand the perception of prominent Shi'ah scholars about the diversity of religions in the past, this chapter looked at the views of three prominent Shi'ah figures namely, al-Tusi, Sadr al-Din and al-Ansari. They were selected because they tried to look at the question of diversity of religions from different, theological, philosophical and jurisprudential angles. They were, moreover, from different geographical and historical areas.

Al-Tusi, referring to some verses, held that the word "Islam" in the Qur'an refers only to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. He maintained that the previous Books were subjected to alteration and interpolation and Islam abrogated them. He, therefore, does not accept their validity.

Sadr al-Din similarly took a sort of exclusivist approach to the diversity of religions. He held that there is only one true religion and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad correspond to that one true faith. Sadr al-Din, however, distinguishes between the validity of religions and salvation. He holds that although Islam is the only true religion, those who sincerely endeavour to find the Truth will be saved even though they may have not realized the Truth itself. The followers of other religions will, therefore, be saved but it does not mean that their religions are true and valid. In other words, in the eyes of Sadr al-Din, there is no necessary relationship between

---

<sup>253</sup> Murtada Al-Ansari, *Fara'id al-Usul*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Jami'i-yi Mudarrisin, n.d). 655-9.

<sup>254</sup> Harold Coward, *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1985). 46.

salvation and validity. Sadr al-Din, therefore, is an exclusivist in terms of validity and Truth, and a pluralist in terms of salvation.

Al-Ansari also presented an exclusivist reading of Islam and held that everybody should follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. For al-Ansari, therefore, whoever disagrees with his beliefs will be considered as a disbeliever. He, nevertheless, holds that the religious rulings of the previous *shari'ahs* can be considered as a source for Muslim jurists. It means that they, in order to deduce Islamic religious decrees, can rely upon the religious rulings of the previous books unless indicated otherwise.

Having acquainted ourselves with the historical attitudes of the three prominent Shi'ah scholars in the past, in order to address the views of Ayatollah Javadi and Professor Ayoub, it is appropriate to study the biographies and the works of these two contemporary Shi'ah thinkers in the next chapter.

### 3 Chapter Three: Biography and Works of Javadi and Ayoub

#### 3.1 Ayatollah Javadi

##### 3.1.1 Biography

‘Abdullah Javadi, son of Mirza Abu al-Hasan, was born into a religious family in Amul (north of Iran) in 1933. Abu al-Hasan, and his father, Fathullah, were respectful clerics in Amul. Abu al-Hasan had many children before ‘Abdullah, but due to the unfortunate lack of medical facilities, they did not survive illnesses.<sup>255</sup>

When ‘Abdullah was five years old, he started his elementary education in a public school in Amul. His father was very eager for his son to become a religious cleric like himself and his grandfather. He, therefore, sent ‘Abdullah to one of the seminary schools in Amul in 1945 where he studied primary books. In 1950, in order to advance his religious education, ‘Abdullah moved to the seminary of Marvi, which was one of the important religious schools in Tehran.<sup>256</sup> He studied the books *al-Makasib*, *Fara'id al-Usul*, *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh Tajrid al-I'tiqad*<sup>257</sup>, *Sharh al-Manzumah*<sup>258</sup>, *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*<sup>259</sup> and *al-Asfar* with the masters of these sciences.

In the Marvi School, Javadi realized that the rational debate appealed better to his mind and endeavoured to work more on intellectual teachings.<sup>260</sup> Abu al-Hasan Sha'rani (1902-1973) and Mahdi Ilahi Qumshih'i (1901-1973) were the most eminent tutors in the field of the intellectual sciences of those days in Tehran. But they could only partly quench Javadi's desire for learning rational knowledge. Having studied in Tehran for five years, he thought that Marvi School was too small for his intellectual quest and could not gratify his thirsty soul, so he decided to move to Qum in 1955.

---

<sup>255</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 1012). 9-18.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>257</sup> It is a philosophical and theological book written by Hasan Hilli (1250-1326). He tries to explain the book of *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* written by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274).

<sup>258</sup> It is a logical and philosophical book written by Mulla Hadi Sabzivari (1797-1873).

<sup>259</sup> Nasir a-Din al-Tusi tries to explain the book of *al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat* written by Avicenna (980-1037). It can be divided to four chapters namely logic, physics, metaphysics and mysticism.

<sup>260</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 62.



Qum was the cradle of jurisprudence and the transmitted sciences (*'ulum-i naqli*), as well as intellectual sciences (*'ulum-i 'aqli*) such as theology and philosophy. Javadi, in order to build up his jurisprudential foundations, attended the lectures of Ayatollah Muhammad Muhaqqiq Damad (1907-1968) for 13 years. These lectures were compiled and published later by Javadi. In the field of the principles of jurisprudence, he benefited from the lectures of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989) for several years.

He was naturally seeking a teacher who would satisfy his desire for intellectual debate. Eventually he found what he had been looking for in Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i. While Javadi entered the seminary of Qum with loads of transmitted and intellectual sciences harvested from Amul and Tehran, when he met Tabataba'i, he realized that his schooling had just started.<sup>261</sup> Javadi was so interested in Tabataba'i that he remained his student for twenty-five years, right up until Tabataba'i's death.<sup>262</sup> He also tried to take part in the private courses of Tabataba'i that were allocated to outstanding students. These classes paved the way for Javadi to pose his questions freely.<sup>263</sup> One of these private classes was on *al-Asfar*. In each class, Tabataba'i used to elaborate certain parts of the book for the students first, and then presented his critical viewpoints on them. In the field of theoretical mysticism (*irfan-i nazari*), Javadi, along with some other students all of whom were thought to have had spiritual intuition, studied *Tamhid al-Qawa'id*<sup>264</sup> under Tabataba'i.<sup>265</sup>

In the eyes of Tabataba'i, all arguments must be purely logical. In order to prove or disprove any claim, he never refers to any poem throughout his scientific life. He believed that many poems were composed in the form of oration and sermons in which the beauty of their words, the elegance of their composition, and their pleasant forms could fascinate the listener and, therefore, could emasculate the power of man's intellect. In fact, in this regard, he follows Avicenna who believed that poems

---

<sup>261</sup> Ibid. 128.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid. 134.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>264</sup> *Tamhid al-Qawa'id* was written by Ibn Tarakih (1368-1431).

<sup>265</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 118. Javadi later depicted this book in three volumes with the name of *'Ayn-i Naddakh*.

could not create a logical mind for thinkers.<sup>266</sup> Javadi, like Tabataba'i, never makes use of any poems or oratorical texts in his lectures and books.<sup>267</sup>

Tabataba'i was a man of pure logic when it came to philosophy. Javadi, like Tabataba'i and Sadr al-Din attempts to conceive philosophy in the light of purely logical principles. It means that he would only make use of logical rules to prove philosophical principles. He then tries to bring the philosophical principles closer to mystical experience. Javadi holds that a Qur'anic interpreter should make use of philosophy and mysticism to understand the Qur'an. In other words, these sciences can help the exegete to get benefits from the knowledge of the Qur'an and receive its divine illumination.<sup>268</sup> Considering his views, Javadi should be called a contemporary Sadraian philosopher.

Javadi's religious activities can be classified into three areas: publication, teaching and dialogue. As will be seen below, he has been a patient interlocutor, a great author and a diligent religious instructor for many years.

### **3.1.2 Interfaith Dialogue**

Javadi took several trips to a number of countries in order to engage in dialogue with distinguished leaders of other traditions, the most important of which are reported below.

One of his important foreign meetings was with Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the former Soviet statesman and the eighth leader of the Soviet Union in the year of 1988. Javadi presented a letter from Ayatollah Khomeini to Gorbachev. This letter was written at the time when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was regarded as one of the most powerful countries in the world and the cold war had not ended yet. The Berlin wall, which was the symbol of separation of the East from the West, was still upright. Communism was running its sovereignty over the Soviet Republics in full force. In this letter, Ayatollah Khomeini informs Gorbachev that the main

---

<sup>266</sup> Ibid. 122-3.

<sup>267</sup> For more information about the intellectual life of Tabataba'i, see, 'Abdullah Javadi, *Shams al-Wahy-i Tabrizi: Siri-yi 'Amali-yi 'Allami-yi Tabataba'i* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007).

<sup>268</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 132-3

problem of their country is not the question of private ownership, economy and freedom, but the absence of real belief in God. He adds that their problem is the same problem that has led, or will lead, the West to an impasse, that is, their futile war against God, the origin of creation. Ayatollah Khomeini predicts that from then on the school of communism would only be found in the historical and political museums of the world. Marxism, he writes, is not the answer to any of the real needs of human beings since it is a materialistic ideology and, as such, is not able to save humanity from the crisis generated by the absence of belief in spirituality, which is the prime calamity of man both in the East and in the West.

In the meeting, Javadi first explains and elaborates on the philosophical letter to Gorbachev and at the end answers his questions. The meeting takes more than two hours. It is interesting that Gorbachev regards this letter as a form of interference in his country's affairs. Javadi replies that, as the leader of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev could do whatever he wants to in his country because he is its leader. Javadi further explains that, as a religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini is not interested in Gorbachev's land, but simply addressing his soul. Javadi asks Gorbachev if a human being is like a tree that dries up after sixty or seventy years and is completely destroyed or like a bird which is free to fly when the cage door is opened. Javadi adds that Ayatollah Khomeini, as a religious leader, means that man's death does not denote his obliteration, but that he continues to live in another form forever in another domain.<sup>269</sup> It is worth mentioning that a few months later, on December 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed.

Another of Javadi's important dialogues occurred in his trip to the Vatican. Since John Paul II had just come back from a journey, Javadi could not have but a short meeting with him. However, he had a long conversation with Cardinal Francis Arinze, the head of the Vatican office for relations with other religions. At the beginning, Javadi highlights the significance and goal of the revealed religions and their Prophets. He says that God, in order to pave the way for establishing the relationship between Himself and man, has sent these Prophets. They tried to guide

---

<sup>269</sup> I have summarized this meeting from these books. See, 'Abdullah Javadi, *Bunyan-i Marsus* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005). 310-4; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Afaq-i Andishih* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 149-173.

human beings to achieve real perfection, so that man does not go astray. He adds that showing the way towards perfection is the duty of Godly messengers.

In this friendly meeting, Cardinal Arinze says that if we, as the creation of God, obey Him, everything in the world will turn toward perfection. From the point of view of Christianity, God loves all humankind. He sent Jesus to show His love to all humankind. He adds that Jesus conveyed an important message: human beings must love one another. Jesus was a symbol for us in this regard. He loved us so much that he lost his life for us. Francis Arinze adds that Christians and Muslims form half of the world's population, and if they try to have a peaceful relationship with each other, half of the world will be in peace. It is obvious, Cardinal Arinze adds, that the Christians and Muslims of the world cannot achieve such a goal in full, but the divine leaders have the duty of encouraging peaceful coexistence and relations.

Javadi agrees that the religious leaders must have such a duty, but they also have the responsibility of directing human societies towards worshipping God and fighting injustice. Javadi expresses hopes that the Vatican follows the way of Prophet Jesus and other inspired Prophets more closely than before. At the end, Javadi points out that the Vatican can end violence and war through its influence.<sup>270</sup>

Javadi also attended the Millennium World Peace Summit in 2001 in New York. The meeting gathered hundreds of religious leaders of the world to address how the religions can pave the way for peaceful relations. During this one-week conference, Javadi confers with some other religious leaders of Jewish, Christian and Hindu faiths. He tries to highlight the common grounds amongst the revealed religions. In the public lecture at the United Nations, he points out that arrogance is the most important barrier to peaceful coexistence. He, like Küng<sup>271</sup>, mentions that peace among the nations can be achieved only through the teachings of religions.<sup>272</sup>

---

<sup>270</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 226-236.

<sup>271</sup> Hans Küng, *Tracing the Way: Spiritual Dimensions of the World Religions*, trans. John Bowden (London/New York: Continuum, 2002). xv.

<sup>272</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 246-257; Javadi, *Afaq-i Andishih*. 294-300.

### 3.1.3 Publications

In addition to serving as a religious teacher and lecturer, Javadi is a prolific religious writer who has authored many valuable books and articles in theology, philosophy and interpretation of the Qur'an. This part aims to describe some of his works relevant to the diversity of religions.

**Book Title: *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim (Commentary of the Noble Qur'an)***

There are two types of interpretation of the Qur'an: one is interpreting it based on the order of the verses, and the other is thematic interpretation. In an interpretation based on the order of the verses, the interpreter takes a chapter (*surah*) and starts interpreting it from the very first verse to the last. In a thematic interpretation, however, the interpreter takes a concept or subject (e.g., revelation) and looks at all the Qur'anic verses concerned with that particular subject.

Javadi is among those interpreters who have done both types of interpretation. *Tasnim* provides an interpretation based on verse order and starts with the first verse of the first chapter of the Qur'an. In the first volume of this book, Javadi writes about two approaches to Qur'anic interpretation, namely, subjective interpretation (*tafsir-i bi ra'y*) and rational interpretation (*tafsir-i 'aqli*).

While Javadi's interpretive approach to the Qur'an is similar to that of his teacher, Tabataba'i,<sup>273</sup> he has tried to concern himself with those topics that have not been taken care of by Tabataba'i in *Al-Mizan*.<sup>274</sup> Aware of some issues recently put forward and discussed by Western scholars, Javadi has tried to analyse and explain the themes related to the philosophy of religion such as religious pluralism<sup>275</sup>, secularism<sup>276</sup> and the role of assumptions in interpretation.<sup>277</sup> Although Javadi's style of interpretation is mainly based on resorting to the Qur'an itself he also makes use

---

<sup>273</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 1 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 19.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>275</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 5 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 88; *ibid.*, 6. 210.

<sup>276</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 1. 239.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid. 224- 9.

of traditions (*hadiths*) to help explain the meaning of the verses, and this is a valuable characteristic of the book.

Another merit of the book is that after interpreting every few verses, Javadi explains some relevant theological and philosophical themes in a discussion entitled *lataif va Isharat* (subtle points). He sometimes quotes other famous interpreters, such as Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149-1209) and Muhammad ‘Abduh (1848-1905) and sometimes criticizes them.<sup>278</sup> He has interpreted two-thirds of the Qur’an and 33 volumes of his exegesis have so far been published.

### **Thematic Interpretation (Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i)**

The Qur’an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad over the course of twenty-three years.<sup>279</sup> It is structured in such a way that not all verses concerning a certain theme can be found in one single chapter. Thus, any interpreter would have to investigate the whole Qur’an to find the verses related to a certain concept and would have to organize them into groups and then interpret them. This type of interpretation is called thematic interpretation. Javadi has published 19 volumes of thematic interpretation of the Qur’an, some of which are as follows in order of publication date.

### **Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Ma‘rifat-shinasi Dar Qur’an* (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an: Epistemology in the Qur’an)**

Muslim thinkers have always considered epistemological issues. Muslim philosophers have discussed epistemological themes in the discussions entitled “the conceptual being”, “the incorporeity of the soul” and “the discursive and experimental intellect”. In Iran, the introduction of Marxist theories of knowledge led Muslim thinkers such as Tabataba‘i and Murtada Mutahhari (1919- 1979) to address epistemological issues. Javadi is among those philosophers who have comprehensively discussed epistemology in the light of Qur’anic verses. In the

---

<sup>278</sup> Ibid. 244.

<sup>279</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Qur’an dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2010). 70-1.

introduction to this book, having mentioned the history and background of epistemology, he refers to some very delicate philosophical views in this regard. This book was first published in 1999. In the second edition, Javadi adds his view of recent issues in epistemology and answers some potential questions that could be asked by readers.<sup>280</sup> He addresses issues such as the definition, role and status of epistemology, intuitional knowledge and the conditions and means of gaining knowledge.

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur‘an-i Karim: Siri-yi Payambaran Dar Qur‘an (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur‘an: The Prophets’ Biographies in the Qur‘an)***

In this book, which is the sixth volume of his thematic interpretation of the Qur‘an, Javadi introduces and explains twenty-four features of the Prophets and then considers the biographies of Prophets Adam, Noah, Salih, Lot, Isaac and Jacob as depicted in the Qur‘an. In the seventh volume, Javadi discusses the biographies of Prophets Joseph, Jethro, Elijah (Elias), Luqman, David, Solomon, Jonah, Zechariah, John and Jesus as described in the Qur‘an. Javadi argues that the Qur‘an is the best and most authentic source for the biographies of the Prophets. He adds that taking into account the historical evidence of the Prophets’ lives reveals the mystery of the perpetuity of their schools and the reason for the disappearance and decline of other creeds.<sup>281</sup>

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur‘an-i Karim: Siri-yi Hadrat-i Muhammad Dar Qur‘an (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur‘an: Prophet Muhammad’s Biography in the Qur‘an)***

This book aims to address the life and biography of Prophet Muhammad through some Qur‘anic verses. Javadi, in the light of the verse “Those messengers We

---

<sup>280</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur‘an-i Karim: Ma‘rifat-shinasi dar Qur‘an*, 19 vols., vol. 13 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2000). 17-8.

<sup>281</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur‘an-i Karim: Siri-yi Piyambaran dar Qur‘an*, 19 vols., vol. 6 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2010). 34.

endowed with gifts, some above others”,<sup>282</sup> holds that Prophet Muhammad is superior to all other Prophets because he is the guardian (*muhaymin*) of the previous Prophets, just as his Book (the Qur’an) is the guardian of the previous revealed Books. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad enjoyed certain characteristics that were absent in other Prophets, and this is why he should be studied more than the others.<sup>283</sup> One of the important chapters of the book deals with those characteristics of the Prophet that make him superior to the previous Prophets. In the other chapters, the author attempts, in the light of Qur’anic verses, to illustrate Prophet Muhammad’s global mission, people’s duty regarding him and his arguments with the Christians and the Jews.

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Vahy Va Nubuvvat Dar Qur’an* (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an: Revelation and Prophethood in the Qur’an)**

With the advent of new interpretation of the nature of revelation by some Western thinkers, this book aims to address their views. Javadi tries to explain the main arguments regarding revelation and answers some of the important questions in this respect. This book, which is divided into three parts and has eight chapters, covers the truth of revelation, the source of revelation, the difference between revelation and religious experience, the scope of revelation, the purposes and benefits of prophethood, the Prophets’ infallibility, and the evidence of the prophethood of Muhammad.<sup>284</sup>

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Fitrat Dar Qur’an* (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an: Human Nature in the Qur’an)**

---

<sup>282</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:253.

<sup>283</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Siri-yi Hadrat-i Muhammad dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 8 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2002). 16-7.

<sup>284</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Vahy va Nubuvvat dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2005).



*Fitrat* literally means “to cut”<sup>285</sup> and, in religious terms, it denotes the conscious inclination towards the Ultimate Reality and God.<sup>286</sup> Human nature has long been one of the controversial concepts discussed by thinkers, and they have expressed different opinions regarding human nature and its effects. Javadi considers this concept in the light of the Qur’an and examines it from different angles. The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, Javadi discusses the definition of nature, the criterion of being natural, the methods of recognition of natural affairs and the infallibility of nature. In the second part, the author investigates the concept of nature in the light of the Qur’an. He divides Qur’anic verses concerning nature into seven categories and then analyses them. The third part of the book looks at the ways nature of man can be improved and the things that can hinder its progress and growth, as described in the Qur’an.

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Hidayat Dar Qur’an (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur’an: Divine Guidance in the Qur’an)***

According to Javadi, mankind needs guidance to reach perfection,<sup>287</sup> and God has provided it with two guides: human nature (*fitrah*), as the internal prophet and the divine Messengers as the external prophets. Divine Prophets not only convey the divine teachings to people but also direct and help discover human nature as a hidden treasure.<sup>288</sup> Based on Qur’anic verses, Javadi argues that the path that can lead to prosperity and perfection is the divine path.<sup>289</sup> Pointing to the fact that the word “*sirat*” has always been used in the singular form in the Qur’an—“This indeed is my straight path, so follow it”<sup>290</sup>—he concludes that there is only one Right Path, although there are many wrong paths.<sup>291</sup> Divine guidance and its manifestations, types of prophetic mission and Qur’anic guidance are the topics which Javadi

<sup>285</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Fitrat dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 12 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2005). 23.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>287</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Hidayat dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 16 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2007). 39-40.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>290</sup> *The Qur’an*. 6:153.

<sup>291</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i*, 16. 258-9.

discusses in this book in detail.

**Book Title: *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Qur'an dar Qur'an (A Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an: Understanding the Qur'an in the Light of the Qur'an)***

Javadi discusses the reality of the Qur'an and the ways in which it was revealed to the Prophet. In Chapter two, he addresses the definition of miracle, how it differs from magic and some manifestations of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an. The finality of Prophet Muhammad and the perfection of the Qur'an have been discussed in this chapter. The last chapter of the book deals with understanding the Qur'an. He discusses the language and culture of the Qur'an as well as the role of reason ('aql) and science in *tafsir*. Javadi addresses the above-mentioned themes in the light of Qur'anic verses.<sup>292</sup>

**Book Title: *Intizar-i Bashar Az Din (Human Expectations of Religion)***

This book addresses man's expectations of religion, which can be considered to be one of the most important concepts of religious thought in the contemporary world. The basic questions that arise are as follows: Why do human beings need religion? Which human need can be satisfied solely by religion? Can scientific progress make us needless of religion?

The book is comprised of three parts, dealing with the historical background to the concept of humankind's expectations of religion, the benefits of religion, global peace, issues regarding the environment and social development as seen from the perspective of the Qur'an.<sup>293</sup>

**Book Title: *Nisbat-i Din Va Dunya (The Relationship between Religion and Worldly Life)***

---

<sup>292</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1.

<sup>293</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar az Din* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2001).

This book aims to address the impact of religion in human life. Some hold that religion has a limited and personal scope of functioning and “should not be involved in the organization of society, education, etc.”.<sup>294</sup> Referring to the origin of such a view, Javadi argues that, after scientific and industrial progress, some came to view religion as restricting or hindering human advancement and even explicitly called religion a fiction and a superstition. Some others have argued that human intellect is sufficient to ensure mankind’s prosperity and that religion is no longer needed.<sup>295</sup> Humanism is one of the origins of such a view in the West.<sup>296</sup> The author then criticizes the secularist view of human life, based on the Qur’an, tradition and reason. In the last part of the book, Javadi comprehensively compares Islamic and secular views of intellect and of economic issues in society.

**Book Title: *Din Shinasi (The Study of Religion)***

In this book, Javadi propounds that since religion is a natural and spiritual need of human beings, it has always been considered as an inseparable part of his life.<sup>297</sup> Although the function of religion could be undermined and weakened by some destructive phenomena, it could not be removed totally from the life of man.<sup>298</sup>

Pointing out some definitions of the philosophy of religion by Western thinkers, he claims that the realm of the philosophy of religion is wider.<sup>299</sup> His book comprises six chapters. In the first chapter, having defined religion, he classifies it into divine and non-divine religions.<sup>300</sup> In the light of the four philosophical causes (efficient cause, final cause, formal cause and material cause), he attempts to prove that the true religion cannot be conceivably plural.<sup>301</sup>

The second chapter attempts to discuss the source of the emergence of religion. In the eyes of Marx, for instance, the exploitation of the masses by capitalists was the

---

<sup>294</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Nisbat-i Din va Dunya* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2002). 12.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid. 44-5.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid. 52-3.

<sup>297</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Din Shinasi* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2004). 17.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. 19.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid. 20-22.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid. 26-7.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid. 29-34.

aim of religions. However, according to the worldview of Islam, the will of God is the only source of religion. Javadi tries to prove this through highlighting the arguments of theologians, philosophers and mystics.<sup>302</sup>

The third chapter addresses the question of the essence versus appearance of religion. Having mentioned different interpretations, he compares the *shari'ah* to a “shell” covering the religious principles, which are the essence of religion. He adds that both have a significant role in salvation. The function of *shari'ah* (shell) in his eyes seems to be like that of a bulb preventing the candle from being blown out.<sup>303</sup>

The fourth chapter turns the attention to religious language. According to the verse “certainly We sent Our apostles with manifested proofs”<sup>304</sup>, the Qur'an should be grasped by everyone. In other words, since the audience of the Qur'an is human nature and, moreover, its main mission is the prosperity of human nature, the Qur'an should be comprehensible for all man. Javadi adds that the Qur'an sometimes employs symbolic language<sup>305</sup> but it is free from any ambiguity or sophistry.

The last chapter concerns the notion of religious pluralism. After mentioning Hick's triple classification (namely, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism), Javadi tries to answer the following questions in the light of Qur'anic verses: Can religion be plural in nature? Can the followers of different religions live peacefully together? Can the followers of all religions claim salvation?<sup>306</sup> What are the implications of religious pluralism?<sup>307</sup>

**Book Title: *Shari'at Dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat (Shari'ah in the Light of Knowledge)***

In about 1982, 'Abdulkarim Soroush introduced the concept of the theoretic contraction and expansion of religion (*qabd va bast-i shari'at*). To summarize, this theory maintains that 1) religion and religious knowledge are two different things; while religion is fixed, religious knowledge is changeable; 2) religious knowledge is

---

<sup>302</sup> Ibid. 27-48.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. 61-74.

<sup>304</sup> *The Qur'an*. 57:25.

<sup>305</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 77-95.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. 185-7.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. 238- 253.

human knowledge, not divine knowledge; 3) different fields of human knowledge are interconnected like the links of a chain, so that when one is changed, others are affected; 4) human non-religious fields of knowledge are constantly changing and improving; since human religious and non-religious fields of knowledge are interrelated, any changes in human non-religious knowledge could make for changes in human religious knowledge. In other words, human religious knowledge is not fixed, but constantly changing.

Javadi, in this book, has analysed and criticized this theory in detail. He discusses subjects such as fixity and change in the comprehension of *shari'ah* and religious knowledge.<sup>308</sup>

**Book Title: *Barahin-i Ithbat-i Khuda* (Proofs for Divine Existence)**

All the divinely-revealed religions believe in the reality of God. Throughout history, theologians of the revealed religions have offered different theological arguments regarding God's existence, and thinkers have presented extensive discussions and investigations in acceptance or rejection of these arguments. Muslim theologians and philosophers like Avicenna and Sadr al-Din have also attempted to clarify these demonstrations. With the ongoing exchange of knowledge through the translation of Western works such as *Philosophy of Religion* by John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* by John Hospers and some articles from the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* edited by Paul Edwards, Javadi has attempted to answer comprehensively the questions or objections propounded by them.

The ontological argument of Anselm, the design argument, the cosmological argument, the moral argument, the religious experience argument and the teleological argument are some of the important arguments for God's existence that have been addressed in this book.<sup>309</sup>

---

<sup>308</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005).

<sup>309</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tabyin-i Barahin-i Ithbat-i Khuda* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 1999). This book has been translated into English. For English translation see, 'Abdullah Javadi, *A Commentary of Theistic Arguments*, trans. Hasan Allahyari (Qum: Ansariyan Publication, 2002).

**Book Title: *Manzilat-i 'Aql dar Hindisi-yi Ma'rifat-i Dini (The Role of Intellect in the Geometry of Religious Knowledge)***

Philosophers and theologians have long discussed the relationship between reason and religion. Some have argued that reason can reject those religious teachings that are not reasonable. Others have held that reason is a valid source of cognition in the comprehension of religious belief just as revelation is.<sup>310</sup> Javadi argues that as revelation and an authentic hadith show God's will, demonstrative intellect and certain syllogism can equally discover the divine will.<sup>311</sup> Thus, reason and revelation are both infallible messengers that never conflict with each other. He believes that reason can make no religious teachings and never adds anything to *shari'ah*, but rather works as a mirror reflecting divine decrees.<sup>312</sup> Javadi analyses and criticises what he deems to be two extremist views of the relationship between reason and revelation and proposes his own moderate view of that relationship.<sup>313</sup> In the last chapter, he discusses the valuable outcomes of taking this moderate view and resolves the imagined conflict between reason and revelation.

**Book Title: *Vahdat-i Javami 'Dar Nahj al-Balaghah (The Unity of Societies in Nahj al-Balaghah)***

With the expansion of the world's population, the followers of different religions are experiencing a new age of relations with others in the global village. Today the followers of religions are not confined to a particular country or region, but the coexistence of various faiths can be tangibly seen in many cities. Therefore, the issue of inter-religious and intra-religious unity is of great importance nowadays.

Javadi attempts to address the issue of such unity from Imam Ali's perspective. In the first chapter, he discusses the definition of, and the necessity for, unity. Unity amongst Muslims, amongst the followers of the revealed Books and amongst human beings (between believers and non-believers) has been comprehensively addressed in

---

<sup>310</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Manzilat-i 'Aql dar Hindisi-yi Ma'rifat-i Dini* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 13.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. 51-2.

the second chapter. In the light of “Say, ‘O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you’”,<sup>314</sup> he claims that three important pivotal unities amongst believers have been mentioned in the Qur’an. The last chapter addresses the issue of schism and conflict amongst believers. He says that this issue is of such significance that refraining from any dispute and schism was part of the *shari‘ahs* of all Prophets.<sup>315</sup>

Having discussed the biography and works of Javadi, the next section aims to look at Ayoub’s biography and works.

## 3.2 Professor Ayoub

### 3.2.1 Biography

Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub was born into a pious Shi‘ah family in 1935 in Jabal ‘Amil, a mountainous region of Southern Lebanon,<sup>316</sup> where most of the inhabitants are Shi‘ites. In the first Islamic century, the Shi‘ah community was established through the emigration of ‘Abudhar Ghifari, a great follower of Prophet Muhammad, to that area.<sup>317</sup> Jabal ‘Amil was the cradle of many prominent Shi‘ah scholars in the course of history so much so that almost each village produced a prominent sage and thinker.<sup>318</sup> After the demise of Zayn al-Din, known as al-Shahid al-Thani (1506-1558), about 700 Shi‘ah jurisprudents participated in his funeral.<sup>319</sup> The region is considered sacred, raising many masters of knowledge and erudition throughout its history,<sup>320</sup> such as al-Muhaqqiq al-Karaki (1461-1534), Muhammad Jamal al-Din al-

---

<sup>314</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3: 64

<sup>315</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Vahdat Javami‘ dar Nahj al-Balaghah* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2010).

<sup>316</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "The Ways of the Introduction of Shi‘ah," *Ma‘rifat* 14 (1995). 85.

<sup>317</sup> Muhammad Hurr al-‘Amili, *Amal al-Amil fi ‘Ulama‘ Jabal ‘Amil*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Baghdad: Maktabah al-Undulus, n.d). 13; Wafiq Sa‘d Al-‘Amili, *Ayn al-Insaf* (Beirut: Dar al-Sirah, 2001). 32-3.

<sup>318</sup> Muhsin Al-Amin, *A‘yan al-Shi‘ah*, 10 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ta‘aruf, 1983). 199; Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *al-Shi‘ah fi al-Mizan* (Beirut: Dar al-Ta‘aruf, 1979). 200; Muhammad Ali Al-Hulw, *Mawsu‘ah al-Adab al-Shi‘r al-Muhsin Ibn ‘Ali* (Qum: Dar al-Kitab, 1998). 116; Hurr al-‘Amili, *Amal al-Amil*, 1. 115.

<sup>319</sup> Hurr al-‘Amili, *Amal al-Amil*, 1. 15. Mughniyyah, *al-Shi‘ah fi al-Mizan*. 200.

<sup>320</sup> Muhsin Al-Amin, *A‘yan al-Shi‘ah*, 10 vols., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Ta‘aruf, 1983). 15.

Makki, known as al-Shahid al-Awwal (1334-1385), al-Shahid al-Thani, al-Shaykh al-Baha'i, and al-Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili (1624-1693).<sup>321</sup>

The majority of the residents of Jabal 'Amil are Muslims; nevertheless, there has been a minority of Christians as well. Ayoub, therefore, grew up in an ambience where Muslims and Christians participated in funerals, weddings, religious events and ceremonies of each other. When he was a child, as Ataullah Siddiqui in his unpublished interview with Ayoub reports, he was sent to a "British Presbyterian missionary school," an environment that changed the direction of his life. In the school, as Ayoub remembers, he "had a Christian upbringing". He says, "my life was kind of influenced by both my parents' deep piety and missionary zeal of my school". He adds that the teachers did not really give him any curriculum or scientific education, rather they attempted to make him Christian and "they did". It created a lot of "tension between him and his family".<sup>322</sup> He says, "I was not converted to Christianity, rather I lived it every day, devotionally and culturally, in my school life". He adds, "I grew up as a Christian at school and a Muslim at home".<sup>323</sup> The Presbyterian education succeeded and Ayoub felt like a saviour who was obliged to bring salvation to his family. His insistence on the saving mission, ultimately led to a deal with his family who wanted to make sure in return that Ayoub kept his Muslim faith and was saved himself. In this complicated situation of mutual, yet seemingly contradictory, expectations, Ayoub found a saviour angel in the person of his mother, who hopefully thought that he was simply experiencing something and that he would surely return to his Muslim faith.<sup>324</sup>

Surprisingly, however, for Ayoub, the Presbyterian educators were not as Christian as they should be. Therefore, he resumed his mission with a group called "American Southern" Baptists. As he was zealous about his missionary role, he actively participated in relevant activities up until the late 1950s. At this time, however, he started to question his religious beliefs. He went to the University of Pennsylvania in

---

<sup>321</sup> For more information about the Shi'ah scholars of Jabal 'Amil, look at Hurr al-'Amili, *Amal al-Amil*, 1.

<sup>322</sup> Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997). 97.

<sup>323</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History* (Oxford: Onworld, 2004). 4.

<sup>324</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 97.



1964 to study theology and in 1966 to Harvard University. The frequent questioning of his own faith finally led him to think that he “could no longer fit into this emotionally-charged expression of faith of the Baptist”, and, as a result, the “Baptist Church” was no longer a satisfactory space of worship to him, and he simply left it.<sup>325</sup>

The Islamic teachings he had received in his childhood encouraged him to go back to the Islamic faith, but, having been deeply engaged in Christianity, the return was not a simple task to accomplish. Therefore, he looked for and found a midway point between Christianity and Islam: “the Quakers”, who were open-minded enough to believe that “the spirit of God” could be found in all people and that, for this reason, everyone’s faith should be respected. His engagement with other Muslim students of the universities as well as his esteemed mentor, Professor Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s advice that he should re-examine his original Islamic belief led him back to Islam, and thus, as his mother had predicted, his Christian ‘experience’ was over and a different experience was begun.<sup>326</sup>

It seems that this new experience paved the way for writing his PhD thesis on “Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of Devotional Aspects of ‘Ashura in Twelver Shi‘ah” under the supervision of Professor Smith in 1975.<sup>327</sup> The purity and sincerity of Imam Hussein and his followers, the thought of ‘Ashura, the issue of mourning and the philosophy of ‘Ashura which are very significant in Shi‘ah thought were addressed. This thesis, which was published later, as Ayoub states, is a considerable English source in the West.<sup>328</sup>

The background of Ayoub and his Islamic and “Christian upbringing” had an enduring effect on him, making him familiar with Christian thoughts through

---

<sup>325</sup> Ibid. 97-8.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid. See also; William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters* (London/New York: Routledge, 1991). 127.

<sup>327</sup> Ayoub, in his interview in the journal of *Ma‘rifat*, says that his PhD supervisor was Professor Smith. Irfan A. Omar mentions two different supervisors: in *A Muslim View of Christianity*, he refers to Annemarie Schimmel, and in *Islam and Other Religions*, he refers to Smith. Irfan A. Omar, "Biography of Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub," in *A Muslim View of Christianity : Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Orbis Books, 2007). Xvii. Irfan A. Omar, "About Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub," in *Islam and Other Religions: Pathways to Dialogue: Essays in honour of Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub* (London/New York: Routledge Taylor/Francis Group, 2006). 193.

<sup>328</sup> Ayoub, "The Ways of the Introduction of Shi‘ah." 2.

Christians' own books. He, therefore, could address the Christian doctrines in a way that Christians could appreciate, more so than many other Muslims. He states, "I grew up in it and then I studied thoroughly in my adult years and you cannot completely ignore your past, it somehow becomes part of your life".<sup>329</sup> This great experience paved the way for Ayoub, therefore, to evaluate the Christian teachings through their own texts. This proficiency encouraged him to advise the Muslim dialogists not to understand Christianity exclusively on the basis of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions. He insists that Christianity should be understood by Muslims in dialogue with Christian sources and in "its own terms".<sup>330</sup> Ayoub criticises some Muslim thinkers, like the contemporary prominent theologian and jurisprudent Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi (1865-1933), who, in the interpretation of verse 2:62, claims that the people of the Book have a true belief neither in the afterlife (*ma'ad*) nor in God.<sup>331</sup> Rejecting such claims, Ayoub holds that Christians believe in the afterlife and the unity of God. He emphasizes the fact that the Qur'anic view of resurrection does not basically differ from the biblical perspective. He suggests that al-Balaghi should have evaluated Christians' beliefs through his extensive study of their scriptures and books, and not through Islamic sources only.<sup>332</sup>

Ayoub holds that, after the world war, the interest of the Western scholars in the scientific researches on the school of Shi'ism gradually waned. Formerly, all the orientalist believed that Islam was to be identified exclusively with the school of Ash'ari and, consequently, considered the Shi'ah school as a Persian or Iranian movement. However, today, there is much stress on and interest in the thoughts, beliefs, history and origin of Shi'i Islam, and there are many students in American universities who attribute more importance to Shi'ism. Nevertheless, Ayoub says, they have not yet fully explored the true beliefs and ideology of Shi'ah. In order to introduce the beliefs of Shi'ites, he attempts to explain the Qur'anic teachings (*ma'arif al-Qur'an*), interpretation of the Qur'an, Islamic mysticism, Islamic philosophy, Islamic theology and Islamic sects (*al-firqah fi al-Islam*) in the different

---

<sup>329</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 98.

<sup>330</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 66-7.

<sup>331</sup> Muhammad Jawad Al-Balaghi, *Ala' al-Rahman fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Bunyad-i Bi'that, 1999). 97.

<sup>332</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 197.

departments of Islamic studies in the universities of the United States of America. Ayoub believes that Shi'ah studies departments in the universities can pave the way for Western students to be more familiar with the history and doctrine of Shi'ah Islam. He holds that, from the seventeenth to the middle of the twentieth century, most Islamic researchers were Jewish scholars and Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, what motivates the students now to study Islam is to be familiar with Islamic civilization, beliefs and mysticism. Ayoub does not consider himself as a religious missionary; rather, he aims only to introduce the school of Shi'ism.<sup>333</sup>

William Montgomery Watt (1906-2006), referring to the history of Muslim-Christian encounters in the course of human history, states that in spite of the strong thoughts of fundamentalists within the Islamic resurgence, some Muslim thinkers are eager to establish a dialogue with the believers of other traditions, especially Christianity. Christians and Muslims have held many conferences and seminars on "common interests" of religious issues in "the last quarter of the century". It seems that these group meetings show that Muslims and Christians "begin to feel their way" towards a profounder understanding of their own convictions. For Christians, as Watt claims, it is very interesting that a few Muslim thinkers, instead of considering the Bible as a "wholly corrupted" scripture, attempt to look at Christian teachings afresh. They try to interpret some dimensions of biblical teachings from Islamic standpoints.<sup>334</sup>

According to Watt, amongst the Muslim thinkers, Ayoub has a better apprehension of Christianity than other Muslim scholars. Undoubtedly, the most significant contributions to cast light upon Muslims' fresh understanding of Christianity have been presented by Ayoub. As Watt states, Ayoub, referring to the early Islamic narrations, attempts to frame a picture of Prophet Jesus according to the early Islamic sources. He tries to draw Christians' attention to the deep, rich and various images of Prophet Jesus in Islam.<sup>335</sup>

---

<sup>333</sup> Ayoub, "The Ways of the Introduction of Shi'ah." 85-7.

<sup>334</sup> Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. 125-6.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid. 127.

### **3.2.2 Education**

Ayoub received his B.A. in Philosophy from the American University of Beirut in 1964. In order to complete his academic education, he moved to the United States of America in 1964. He received his M.A in “Religious Thought” from the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 and his PhD in “History of Religion” from Harvard University in 1975.<sup>336</sup>

### **3.2.3 Career**

Due to his important background and excellent education, Ayoub has played great roles in the academia. In the years 1973-1974, Ayoub was a Lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. He has also been a research Fellow at Middle East Centre in the University of Pennsylvania since 1988. He was an Adjunct Professor at the Duncan Black Macdonald Centre of Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations in Hartford Seminary in 1998-1994. He, moreover, was a visiting professor at different universities and important religious centres like the University of Balamand (in Tripoli, Lebanon), Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (in Wyncote), the Centre for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University (in Washington), the Balamand Eastern Orthodox Seminary (in Koura, Lebanon), the Institute for Islamic Studies, McGill University, (in Montreal) and the Centre for Religious Studies and the University of Toronto. From 1988 to 2008, he served as the director of Islamic Studies in the Department of Religions at Temple University.<sup>337</sup>

Ayoub, due to his inter-religious works and “academic achievement”, has been granted some valuable awards, such as Kent Doctoral Fellowship and Canada Council Fellowship. He received the Fulbright Exchange of Scholars program for Malaysia in 1994-95. In the year 2000 on Fulbright Exchange of Scholars program for Egypt and Lebanon, he went to these countries. He was also awarded the Fulbright Senior Specialists Program for Malaysia in January 2003.<sup>338</sup>

---

<sup>336</sup> Omar, "Biography of Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub." xvii.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

Because of his excellent academic education and experience in religious dialogue, Ayoub is one of the prominent religious speakers in the West. He gave more than one hundred talks in different parts of the world between 1988 and 2007.<sup>339</sup>

### 3.2.4 Publications

As a prolific author, Ayoub has also written and compiled many valuable books and articles in the realm of Islam and religious dialogue. This part will present an overview of his works relevant to the diversity of religions.

#### Books

##### **Book Title: *The Qur'an and Its Interpretation***

Ayoub in, this valuable book, endeavours to present the Qur'an to the "English reader" as Muslims understand it.<sup>340</sup> In order to introduce different opinions and interpretations "coherently and candidly", he attempts to use three criteria in his interpretation of Qur'anic verses. These criteria are the following: first, relying on the historical context for the elucidation of the literal meaning of the verse and its practical application; second, presenting theological questions or arguments that the verses may raise for the interpreter; and third, paying attention to the relationship of Muslims with the followers of other religions.<sup>341</sup>

Considering the different denominational affiliations and interests of commentators, Ayoub has selected different sources from different schools such as the "Mu'tazili, philosophical and mystical" commentaries.<sup>342</sup>

Since Qur'anic teachings play an important role in the life of Muslims, Ayoub maintains that the accurate understanding of the Qur'an is reflected in Islamic

---

<sup>339</sup> For autobiography of Ayoub please see; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*.3-7. Irfan A. Omar has written a short interesting biography of Ayoub. Omar, "About Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub." 193-4; Omar, "Biography of Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub." xi-xiii.

<sup>340</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984). 1.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid. 2-3.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid. 3.

societies. He divides Qur'anic verses into “*zahir*” (outer dimension) and “*batin*” (inner dimension). Accordingly, understanding the Qur'an will be accomplished on two levels: an “exoteric level” (exegesis) and an “esoteric level” (interpretation). Moreover, he adds that the understanding of *muhkam* (unambiguous), *mutashabih* (ambiguous) and *mansukh* (abrogated) verses will lead the commentator to reach the core of Qur'anic verses.<sup>343</sup> The Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad are the most important sources for commentators. However, a variety of exegetical books “according to individual opinion” have been presented “through the centuries”.<sup>344</sup> He holds that “knowledge of the religious sciences”, “sincere piety and depth of intuition” are essential qualities for a commentator. Having studied the exegetical principles, he mentions some important early commentators and “their place in its development”.<sup>345</sup>

It is worth noting that Ayoub's aim “is not to engage in polemics or apologetics, nor is it to argue for any position or interpretation in favor of another”, but rather, he attempts to depict different opinions reasonably.<sup>346</sup>

### **Book Title: *Islam: Faith and History***

In this book, Ayoub attempts to highlight the history and passage of Islam throughout time from the early to modern days. The term Islam signifies “submission or surrender” but now it means, conventionally, the third and final monotheistic religion, which was institutionalized by Prophet Muhammad in the Middle East.<sup>347</sup> The book is comprised of eleven chapters. The second chapter addresses the principles of prophethood and revelation in the Qur'an. In the light of some Qur'anic verses, he believes that God must send divine messages through his individual divinely-inspired Prophets.<sup>348</sup> The principle tenets of Islam (*usul al-din*) and its precepts (*furu' al-din*) are the issues that are discussed in the third chapter. The issues of succession to the Prophet (caliphs), the spread of Islam, the religious

---

<sup>343</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 2. viii. See also; *ibid.*, 1. 3.

<sup>347</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 8.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid. 30-1.

science, Sufism, theology and philosophy, women and men, Islam and modernity are the other topics that Ayoub addresses comprehensively.

## Articles

### Article Title: “*Dhimmah* in the Qur’an and Hadith”

In this article, Ayoub attempts to address the concept of *dhimmah* in the light of Qur’anic verses and hadith. *Dhimmah*, as famous Arab philologists like al-Jawhari and Ibn-Manzur (d. 1311) say, literally denotes “sanctity”, “assurance of safety” or “protection”. Therefore, since non-Muslims are entered “into a covenant of protection with Muslims,” they are referred to as *ahl al-dhimmah*. The Qur’an twice uses the term *al-dhimmah* in a narrow and restricted sense. It refers to an agreement that should be respected.<sup>349</sup>

Ayoub holds that *dhimmah*, in the time of Prophet Muhammad, implied a moral and spiritual concept. In other words, it describes the “relationship of humanity to God” and the duty of men according to this relationship.<sup>350</sup> Moreover, according to some hadiths, it refers to being loyal (or professing loyalty) to a promise and a treaty.<sup>351</sup> Nobody is, therefore, allowed to break a covenant that he has made with non-Muslims.

However, Ayoub holds that the term *dhimmah* later “became reified” as “a technical legal concept” and its transcendental dimension was lost. This means that the term *dhimmah*, which used to refer to “moral and spiritual relations” amongst believers, “was later reduced to a mere name or a designation of subordinate communities”.<sup>352</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> Ayoub, "Dhimmah in the Qur'an." 98-9. This article was originally published in *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, no 2 (Spring 1983): 172-82. I draw on *Muslim View of Christianity*, which includes most of Ayoub's articles and also gives the details of their original publication.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid. 100.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid. 101- 2.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid. 98-105.

**Article Title: “Muslim Views of Christianity: Some Modern Examples”**

Islam began and flourished in an ambiance permeated by “Judeo-Christian” thought. It also made use of the “rich legacy of Greek wisdom and science” that had formed the civilization of Christianity. Having enriched and revitalized this great legacy, Islam bequeathed it to the West, thus inspiring the “Renaissance” in the medieval period. Islam and Christianity, therefore, have a deep and close relationship in the realms of philosophy and sciences. Very soon, however, due to lack of dialogue, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of both Muslims and Christians provoked conflicts and disagreements among them. The dialogues between Muslims and Christians generally occurred either during a war or took place between the “colonizing and colonized,” which was in any case an unequal situation.<sup>353</sup>

In this article, Ayoub attempts to assess the work on Christianity of four Muslim thinkers: Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh, his student Sayyid Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1935), Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zahrah and Ahmad Shalabi.<sup>354</sup> These scholars tried to answer Christians’ criticism of Islam. Ayoub, however, maintains that these thinkers presented a “stereotypical” picture. He adds that if Christians had presented Islam as they (the four Muslim scholars) had Christianity, the result would have been the same. He claims that Christians and Muslims should study traditions of each other on their own terms. The dialogue between the followers of the two faiths is not “a confrontation between” thoughts. He suggests that the believers should “go beyond the letter of scriptures”, their beliefs and traditions.<sup>355</sup>

**Article Title: “The Word of God and the Voices of Humanity”**

The Prophets and saints manifest God’s “ideal goals”, which are not achievable by ordinary people. They thus convey the message and the will of God to man. Ayoub adds that if the sacred individuals and the “goals they embody are bound by doctrinal formulations they lose their dynamic immediacy as persons and goals and become mere subjects of theoretical debate and sources of conflict”. Ayoub maintains that if

---

<sup>353</sup> Ayoub, "Muslim Views of Christianity." 212-3. This article was originally published in *Islamochristiana* 10 (1984): 49- 70.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid. 213.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. 229.



people in the past had followed the guidance of those who had acquired “Enlightenment, true knowledge and holiness,” they would have been able to attain perfection. This study aims to investigate this point from the Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian and Islamic viewpoints.<sup>356</sup>

Referring to some common spiritual guidance of religions, Ayoub says that Buddha and Christ, inheriting a rich tradition of perfect purity and wisdom, “illuminated the way to salvation for countless seekers” of truth.<sup>357</sup> The Bible presents a moral picture of “ancient Israel”. Such a vision has been an important element in “shaping the religious and cultural heritage of Western society”.<sup>358</sup> Many non-Christians, such as Gandhi and Muslim mystics, have been inspired by Christ. He is still, as a savior, able to help us to establish peace.<sup>359</sup> From the Islamic viewpoint, human beings need the guidance of the Prophets.<sup>360</sup> They convey the message of God to everybody; as the Qur'an says, “there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it”.<sup>361</sup> In this article Ayoub attempts to highlight the religious and spiritual life and teachings of holy individuals. They are the friends of God who want to build a link between “temporal” man and the ultimate Reality.

#### **Article Title: “A Muslim Appreciation of Christian Holiness”**

Holiness is an acquired quality and state which a person or thing can possess. Attaining this state has indeed been one of the most momentous quests of man throughout the history of religions. There are significant similarities among the traditions of “Semitic” religions concerning the way of achieving a state of holiness or a holy life, but Ayoub attempts to address this concept from the Islamic viewpoint.

This study aims to focus upon baptism and mass as the two significant elements of holiness in Christianity. These two ceremonies were “symbolic acts of renewal or reaffirmation of faith in God’s salvific love”. Man can share efficiently in His

---

<sup>356</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "The Word of God and the Voices of Humanity," in *The Experience of Religious Diversity*, ed. John Hick and Hassan Askari (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Co, 1985). 53-4.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid. 56-7.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid. 58 -9.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid. 60-1.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid. 61-2.

<sup>361</sup> *The Qur'an*. 35:24.

“transcendence” via sincere prayers and supplications. In other words, the mass’s sacramental prayers are a kind of connection between “ephemeral” human beings and the ultimate Reality.<sup>362</sup> He also refers to the affairs that can lead people away from God and says that “self-centredness” is one of the most powerful enemies of man’s soul. It never leaves room in our life for almighty God.<sup>363</sup>

However, he believes that the Qur’an calls the concept of “holiness” by different names. In the eyes of Islam, a person who refrains from evil and purifies himself by good deeds is a holy person. Unlike Christianity, Islam has no saints. The *wali* (a friend of God) is a person who recognizes God as his guide. Therefore, the term *wali* is closer in meaning to the Old Testament’s “man of God” than to the Catholic Church’s “saint”.<sup>364</sup> He concludes that, there are “no sacraments” in Islam. It means that good deeds can lead us towards holiness without any need for a sacramental rite of purification.

#### **Article Title: “Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict”**

Throughout history, Muslims and Christians have communicated ambivalently. They have provided opportunities both for intense conflict and for constructive dialogue. Christians and Muslims both hold an exclusivist claim to salvation,<sup>365</sup> which contradicts their claim that they have a “universal message” for all human beings and that God desires the “guidance and salvation” of all His servants.<sup>366</sup> These absolute claims have been the negative aspects of Muslim-Christian relations.

The article attempts to cast light on the roots of Muslim-Christian conflict from a Muslim viewpoint. Moreover, it tries to propound new and effective “horizons in relations between” the followers of the two faiths. Ayoub believes that there have been “mistrust, misgiving and misunderstanding” in Muslim-Christian relations. The

---

<sup>362</sup> Ayoub, "A Muslim Appreciation." 75. This article was originally published in *Islamochristiana* 11 (1985): 91-98.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid. 77-8.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid. 78.

<sup>365</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 43-4. This article was originally published in *The Muslim World* 79, no. 1 (January 1989): 25-45.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid. 45.

author has presented this study in order to establish with Christians a new and real beginning “based on mutual goodwill” and tolerant dialogue.<sup>367</sup>

**Article Title: “The Islamic Context of Muslim-Christian Relations”**

Islam considers itself a manifestation of the Abrahamic faith. Moreover, the message of Prophet Muhammad is complementary to, and compatible with, the Old and New Testaments.<sup>368</sup> The Qur’an describes a relationship of “mutual respect” between Muslims and Christians. Torah and Gospel, in the eyes of the Qur’an, are considered as “sources of guidance and light”.<sup>369</sup> Although there are many common grounds between Islam and Christianity, the Qur’an does not present particular rules about Muslim-Christian relationships.<sup>370</sup> The author, in this article, attempts to distinguish between the Qur’anic teachings that insist on having relationship of mutual respect and what Muslims did later.<sup>371</sup> The infringement of ethical rules by some Muslims in the past stemmed from a misinterpretation of some Qur’anic verses. Conversion and freedom of faith are discussed at the end of this article.

**Article Title: “Islam and Christianity between Tolerance and Acceptance”**

Tolerance and peaceful coexistence are essential principles in Islam and Christianity. The history of Islam has borne witness that Muslims and Christians, “in spite of profound and irreconcilable theological differences”, had a peaceful relationship in the time of Prophet Muhammad. Moreover, the truth of both faiths has been accepted.<sup>372</sup> However, in the course of history, the idea of religious tolerance and mutual acceptance gradually “gave way to the idea of exclusivism and hostility”. The author attempts to prove that the Qur’an is in favour of a pluralistic world in which

---

<sup>367</sup> Ibid. 43.

<sup>368</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18. This article was originally published in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramazi Jibran Bikhazi. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1990): 461-77.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid. 27.

<sup>372</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 35-6. This article was originally published in *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 2, no. 2 (December 1991): 171-8.

different religions “can live side by side in mutual and creative acceptance”.<sup>373</sup> Therefore, religious exclusivism does not conform to Qur’anic teachings.<sup>374</sup>

**Article Title: “The Need for Harmony and Collaboration between Muslims and Christians”**

Islam and Christianity “were born in seclusion in public”.<sup>375</sup> Therefore, there are many common grounds in Christianity and Islam. They describe themselves as universal religions for all humankind. In the eyes of the two faiths, all men are equal.<sup>376</sup> In order to understand the two traditions today, as Ayoub maintains, some of the significant “outlines of our history” should be traced.<sup>377</sup> The author attempts to re-examine the concept of revelation in the two traditions. Although revelation plays a significant role in both faiths, it is interpreted differently. Revelation in Islam is the message that was sent to Prophet Muhammad,<sup>378</sup> but in Christianity, it is the “Word to be the agent of creation”. There is disagreement on the concept of revelation between Muslims and Christians;<sup>379</sup> nevertheless, there are some common grounds that can make the two faiths united.<sup>380</sup>

**Article Title: “Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms *Ibn* and *Walad* in the Qur’an and *Tafsir* Tradition”**

Jesus Christ has provided both a link between Christians and Muslims and a theological obstacle that has caused separation between the two faiths. Jesus, as the “only-begotten Son of God” is one of the barriers dividing the two communities.<sup>381</sup> However, the theological complications should not be considered as an “impenetrable wall” splitting the two societies. The present article, in order to obtain

---

<sup>373</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid. 37.

<sup>375</sup> Ayoub, “The Need for Harmony.” 9-10. This article was originally published before in *Information and Formation* (Kuala Lumpur: Catholic Research Centre, 1994): 109-19.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid. 9.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>381</sup> Ayoub, “Jesus the Son of God.” 117. This article was originally published in *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, ed, Yvonne Y, Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1995): 65-81.

good relations with Christians, attempts to make “a small breach in this wall” through establishing a dialogue.

The terms *ibn* and *walad* signify a “filial relationship” in the Qur’an.<sup>382</sup> In the light of these two terms, some Muslim commentators have argued against “Christ’s Divine sonship”.<sup>383</sup> The author, in order to clarify whether these two terms refer to Jesus or to Christians who were accused of describing Jesus as the “*walad* offspring of God” in the Qur’an, attempts to scrutinize the theological importance of the terms *ibn* and *walad* in the Qur’an and according to some of the important commentators.

#### **Article Title: “Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur’an and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition”**

The Qur’an is the final source of ethical guidance recommending Muslims to ponder on its verses. Therefore, from the time of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims attempted to comprehend its verses through the Qur’anic exegetes. Today Qur’anic commentators provide “one of the best indicators of the ideological and religious moods” of Islamic societies. The present article tries to examine the viewpoints of some eminent Qur’anic commentators (Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, Wahba al-Zuhayli, Muhammad Mutwalli Sha’rawi, Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi, Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, Nasir Makarim and Mahmud Taliqani) regarding Christianity and Christians.<sup>384</sup> Ayoub tries to look at the views of these exegetes on the most cited verse in the realm of religious pluralism, namely, verse 2:62. They attempt to look at it from ideological and juridical perspectives.

The author believes that, due to differences in human races and languages, the diversity of religions is unavoidable and the “plurality of religious communities and the essential validity of their faiths” have been recognized by the Qur’an.<sup>385</sup>

---

<sup>382</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 191-201. This article was first published in *Islam and Christian Muslim Relations* 8, no 2 (July 1997): 145- 64. It was reprinted again in *Islam and Pluralism*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2012): 129-154.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. 190.

### **Article Title: “Islam and Pluralism”**

The Qur'an is the final message of God<sup>386</sup> accepting the diversity of religions, languages and ethnic groups. However, this diversity should be recognized as a “unity in diversity”. On the other hand, in order to prevent any kind of conflict and division which was condemned by the Qur'an<sup>387</sup>, believers should accept and appreciate the diversity of religions and cultures. The holy books and traditions of religions should be respected by believers.<sup>388</sup> The followers of all religions, in order to understand the Ultimate Reality, should involve themselves in dialogue more than before.<sup>389</sup> The article also attempts to prove that some Qur'anic verses (2:62 and 5:69) explicitly affirm religious pluralism.<sup>390</sup>

### **Article Title: “Pope John-Paul II on Islam”**

Muslim-Christian relations date back to the appearance of Islam (or to the time of Prophet Muhammad). While the Qur'an describes Christians as faithful, “richly rewarded by God” and “the nearest in amity” to the followers of Prophet Muhammad, it also reproaches them for some extreme claims and even accuses them of being “faithless”.<sup>391</sup> Muslim-Christian relations, however, are much better than before, and the basic views of the church and the “*ummah* towards each other” have changed slightly.<sup>392</sup>

A fruitful Muslim-Christian dialogue dates from Vatican II (1962-1965). The author, in this study, aims to view Muslims and Islam from the perspective of the Catholic

---

<sup>386</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 104. This article is derived from the first part of Ayoub's lecture, delivered at the “Islam and Pluralism” consultation, held at The Islamic Foundation, Leicester on 17 November, 1996. It was published in *Encounters: Journal of Inter-cultural Perspectives*, Vol. 3, Part 2, September, 1997, 103-118. This essay was published in other forms in the following publications: a- “Islam and the Challenge of Religious Pluralism.” *Global Dialogue* 2, 1 (Winter 2000): 53-64. b- ‘Religious Pluralism and the Challenges of Inclusivism, Exclusivism and Globalism: An Islamic Perspective’, in Th. Sumartana et al. (eds.), *Commitment of Faiths: Identity, Plurality and Gender*. Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Institute of DIAN/Interfidei, 2002. c- ‘The Qur'an and Religious pluralism’, in Roger Boase (ed.), *Islam and Global Dialogue Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, England, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005, 273-81.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid. 109.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid. 110.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. 113-5.

<sup>391</sup> *The Qur'an*. 4:171; 5:17; 5:72-3 and 5:77.

<sup>392</sup> Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 232. This essay was originally published in John Paul II and *Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Byron L. Sherwin and Harold Kasimov (New York: Orbis Books, 1999): 169-84.

Church, making particular use of the statements of Pope John-Paul II between the years 1979 and 1994 concerning Islam.<sup>393</sup> During his papacy he travelled around the world and spread his message globally. The essence of his lectures concerned two significant points, namely, “inter-religious dialogue” and “peaceful co-existence”.<sup>394</sup> The Pope, stressing the “basis of a common spiritual and moral patrimony,” held that, since Christians and Muslims believe in the One God, they could be considered as one family.<sup>395</sup> However, it seems that the Pope concurs with the doctrine “*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*”. Although he promotes “inter-religious dialogue”, it is still an instrument of evangelization.<sup>396</sup>

### **Article Title: “Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Goals and Obstacles”**

In this article, Ayoub attempts to address the goals and obstacles in Christian-Muslim dialogue. Referring to the Qur’an<sup>397</sup>, he considers Christians to be the closest “people in amity to the Muslims”. Consequently, the dialogue between them should be considered as being between two friends, not enemies. However, the Christian-Muslim relations have been tainted due to some misinterpretations of the Qur’an.<sup>398</sup> Having pointed to some common principles held in Islam and Christianity, the author endeavours to clarify some urgent and “long-term goals” for a fruitful dialogue. “Mutual acceptance of the legitimacy and authenticity of the religious tradition” as a divine religion, honest respect for each other and “acceptance by both Christians and Muslims of the other as an equal partner” are the most pressing goals in such a dialogue.<sup>399</sup> Having mentioned the types of dialogue, he states that, although Islam and Christianity have been accepted as divine religions, there are still some perceptible obstacles in “Muslim-Christian dialogue”. Christians, for instance, “are not so far able to accept Islam as an authentic post-Christian religious tradition”.

---

<sup>393</sup> Ibid. 233.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid. . 234, 236 and 240.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid. 234.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid. 242-3.

<sup>397</sup> It says, “Surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the faithful to be those who say, ‘We are Christians.’ That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not arrogant”. *The Qur’an*. 5:82.

<sup>398</sup> Ayoub, “Christian-Muslim Dialogue.” 64-5. This article was first published in *The Muslim World* 94, no. 3 (July 2004): 313-19.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid. 66.

Muslims, likewise, “have been unable to accept Christians and their faith in the triune God”.<sup>400</sup>

In the light of what has been mentioned, it could be concluded that Ayoub, in order to establish a constructive dialogue, attempts to highlight its goals as well as its obstacles. He is a staunch supporter of dialogue based on equal dignity and mutual acknowledgment. Dialogue would not bear fruit if the dialogists are exclusivists and bear hostility against each other.

After this cursory glance at the life and works of Ayoub and Javadi, it is now time to examine their views on religions and their diversity.

---

<sup>400</sup> Ibid. 69.



## 4 Chapter Four: Ayatollah Javadi and Religions

### 4.1 Introduction

Plurality of religions usually has been approached from two important angles, that is, the philosophy of the diversity of religions and the dialogue between religions.<sup>401</sup> Thus, in order to elaborate the views of Ayatollah Javadi in a precise manner, this chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first part, it tries to look at the definitions of religion in the eyes of some Western scholars and Javadi and the way they could be classified. The issue of validity and invalidity of religions will be discussed as a main part of this section. The second part of this chapter will address the concepts of religious unity and peace in the eyes of Javadi. It aims finally to discuss the Qur'anic grounds for the peaceful coexistence of the people of all faith.

### 4.2 First Part: Javadi and the Diversity of Religions

#### 4.2.1 Definitions of Religion

It is obvious that the literal meaning of religion (*din*) has little bearing on the present research. However, since Javadi, like other Shi'ah theologians, has taken a literal definition as his starting point, we need to address that first.<sup>402</sup> According to the famous philologist, al-Raghib al-Isfahani (d. 1108), the term “*din*”, in the Arabic language, literally means requital and obedience.<sup>403</sup> In the view of Ibn Manzur (1233-1312) it signifies judgment, reckoning, obedience, Islam and custom.<sup>404</sup> These two famous Arab philologists attempt only to provide different usages of the term *din* without indicating their common denominator. Ibn Faris (940-1005), however, after mentioning different meanings of each word, tries to condense them into one single

---

<sup>401</sup> Muhammad Legenhausen distinguishes three aspects of religious pluralism, that is, the epistemological approach, salvation and dialogue. Muhammad Legenhausen, "A Muslim's Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism," in *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, ed. Roger Boase (Surrey/Burlington: Ashgate, 2005). 53-4; Legenhausen, *Islam and Religious Pluralism*. 31-4.

<sup>402</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Ravabit-i Bayn al-Milal* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 22.

<sup>403</sup> Husein Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *al-Mufradat fi Ghara'ib al-Qur'an* (Beirut/Damascus: Dar al-'Ilm al-Shamitiyyah, 1991). 323.

<sup>404</sup> Muhammad Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 15 vols., vol. 13 (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1993). 169.

meaning. Thus, he holds that the principle meaning of the term *din* is submission. In his view, submission is an exhaustive meaning for *din*, to which all its different meanings, including obedience, Islam and return.<sup>405</sup> Hasan Mustafavi (1918-2005), in his significant research on Qur'anic words, attempts to evaluate the meanings of *din*. He says that the term *din* and its derivatives only mean submission to a specific law, adding that the other meanings such as reckoning, requital, custom, etc., are all examples and outcomes of that meaning (submission). This is to say that if someone submits to the laws, he deserves the reward; if someone submits to the laws, he actually obeys it.<sup>406</sup> Therefore, in the Arabic language, obedience, reckoning, requital and the like are not the meanings of religion, but rather instances and consequences of submission to the laws as outlined in *din*.

As to the conventional meaning of the term, Javadi is ostensibly influenced by the views of early Shi'ah theologians, although he tries to enrich and improve on them. To see Javadi's reliance on his predecessors and his attempt to improve their views, it is enough to look at the views of two such scholars. Al-Sayyid al-Murtada, a very well-known Shi'ah theologian, for instance, holds that religion is a name for the entire teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>407</sup> Two hundred years later, another distinguished theologian, Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (1238-1299), presented a similar definition of *din*. He states that religion is to be understood as the *shari'ah* that was conveyed by the Prophets through divine revelations.<sup>408</sup> However, Javadi, due to the weakness in both substantive and functional aspects of these definitions, proposes a definition that combines both features. He states that *din* consists of beliefs, morals, laws and rules (*shari'ah*) which inspire and lead men towards salvation.<sup>409</sup> As it is clear, in his definition, Javadi tries to highlight both the convictional and the functional aspects of religions. To clarify his point further, we need to elaborate on the two broad types of definitions provided for religion.

<sup>405</sup> Ahmad Ibn Faris, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, 6 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami, 1983). 319-20.

<sup>406</sup> Hasan Mustafavi, *al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur'an al-Karim*, 14 vols., vol. 3 (Tehran: Bungah-i Tarjumih va Nashr-i Kitab, 1981). 289.

<sup>407</sup> al-Sayyid Al-Murtada, *Rasa'il al-Sharif al-Murtada*, 4 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, 1984). 270

<sup>408</sup> Ibn Maytham Al-Bahrani, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Maktab al-A'lam al-Islami, 1983). 108.

<sup>409</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 24; Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 22; Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 111; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3. 88.

#### 4.2.1.1 Types of Definition

For religion, like other issues and phenomena, many different definitions have been framed by various religious scholars. These definitions can be classified into two broad groups, namely, “Substantive” and “Functional”.<sup>410</sup>

##### 4.2.1.1.1 The Substantive Definition

The “substantive definition” aims to elaborate the nature of religion.<sup>411</sup> “Sacred or supernatural”, “spiritual”, “superhuman”, and “super-empirical” constitute the main elements in substantive definitions.<sup>412</sup> Edwards Tylor’s definition, a British anthropologist (1832- 1917), can be seen as an example of substantive definitions.<sup>413</sup> He defines religion as a “belief in Spiritual Beings”.<sup>414</sup> Roland Robertson (b. 1938), a Scottish sociologist, proposes a similar definition of religion.<sup>415</sup> He holds that religion is a belief in “super-empirical” and “transcendent reality”.<sup>416</sup> In these definitions, the convictional aspect of religion, that is, faith in the “transcendent reality,” has been emphasized. There is no doubt that conviction and belief are a part of every religion, but that is not all. We know that religious rulings are the other part of many religions.

Moreover, although such inclusive definitions are useful, it is necessary as well to address “the differences among religions as distinct historical entities”, and to

---

<sup>410</sup> See; John Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1970). 4-5.

<sup>411</sup> Malcolm Hamilton, *The Sociology of Religion*, 2th ed. (London/New York: Routledge, 2001). 18. Yinger, *The Scientific Study*. 4.

<sup>412</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 15-8.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>414</sup> Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871). 383.

<sup>415</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 17.

<sup>416</sup> Roland Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970). 47; Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 17. Melford E. Spiro also describes religion as an “institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings”. Melford E. Spiro, “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation,” in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966). 96. See also; Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 15-6.

describe, contrast and compare “their doctrines, rites, sacred texts, typical group structures and the like”.<sup>417</sup>

Substantive definitions can draw the limits and boundaries of religions and can be valuable for those who want to understand them as “historical and cultural facts”, but they cannot be of great value with regard to religion as a “panhuman” and supernatural “phenomenon”. In other words, a researcher engaged in a comparative study of religions not only needs to address the similarities and dissimilarities in beliefs and practices amongst religions but also should consider the functions of religions as well. Moreover, if he wants to concentrate on the effective influence of religions upon the character of men, the issue of functions in religions is very important.<sup>418</sup> Therefore, due to such disadvantages in substantive definitions, some religious scholars prefer to make use of functional definitions.<sup>419</sup>

#### **4.2.1.1.2 The Functional Definition**

The “functional definition” states, “what religion does”.<sup>420</sup> In other words, functionalists do not deal with the origins and the essence of religions, but rather with “the social functions of religions, i.e. the contribution that they make to the formation and maintenance of a social order”.<sup>421</sup> Therefore, such a definition, instead of drawing attention to the essence of religion, its origin, its structures and its rites, addresses the social and psychological consequences of religion and considers the ultimate aims of human life as a function of religion.

A religion, for functionalists, is “a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggle with these ultimate problems of human life”.<sup>422</sup> It seems that to functionalists, what leads the people to such functions and aims can be considered as a religion although scholars may not formally name it a religion.

---

<sup>417</sup> Yinger, *The Scientific Study*. 4; Jean-Paul Willaime, *Jami‘ Shinasi-i Din (Sociologie Des Religions)*, trans. ‘Abdurrahim Gawahi (Tehran: Tibyan, 1997). 171.

<sup>418</sup> Yinger, *The Scientific Study*. 4-6; Willaime, *Jami‘ Shinasi-i Din*. 171.

<sup>419</sup> Yinger, *The Scientific Study*. 5.

<sup>420</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 19.

<sup>421</sup> A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses* (London: Cohen&West, 1952). 154. See also; Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 131; Willaime, *Jami‘ Shinasi-i Din*. 167.

<sup>422</sup> Yinger, *The Scientific Study*. 7.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), the famous French sociologist and philosopher, emphasising the social character of religions, proposed his functional definition.<sup>423</sup> Religion, from Durkheim's perspective, is a "a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community, called a Church, all those who adhere to them".<sup>424</sup>

Although functional definitions are more useful and practical, they are not well-qualified definitions of religion. Such definitions, as Hamilton says, incline to being circular definitions.<sup>425</sup> This means that the term "ultimate" plays a great role in functional definitions, and religion is generally defined by the term "ultimate". On the other hand, understanding the ultimate problems of people depends on a prior understanding of religion. Therefore, a functional definition tends to be a circular definition.

Moreover, functional definitions are "too broad" and inclusive; they include many social phenomena which in themselves cannot be termed religion. According to such definitions, some ideologies and schools which are clearly anti-religious, like communism, can be considered as religions.<sup>426</sup> Some functional definitions of religions are so broad that they can include any groups with an "enthusiastic purpose or strong loyalty".<sup>427</sup> Similarly, the fanatical followers of a football team, for instance, might equally be considered as followers of a particular religion.<sup>428</sup>

In the light of the above explanation, the superiority of Javadi's definition over that of his predecessors, namely al-Sayyid al-Murtada and al-Bahrani, becomes clear. His predecessors not only limited the definition of religion to the religion of Islam, but also focused only on its substance and neglected its function. Javadi's definition of

---

<sup>423</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 14.

<sup>424</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain, 2 ed. (London: Allen/Unwin, 1979). 47. See also; Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 14.

<sup>425</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 19.

<sup>426</sup> Ibid.

<sup>427</sup> Betty R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion* (London: Hutchinson, 1970). 33. See also; Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 19.

<sup>428</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 19.

*din* as a system of beliefs, morals, laws and rules (*shari'ah*) which inspire and lead men towards salvation<sup>429</sup> incorporates both substantive and functional aspects.

#### 4.2.2 Classification of Religions

Religions can be classified in different ways. Küng, for instance, classifies them according to their founders into three types: 1) the mystic-centred religions, in which the “main figure” is “the mystic,” as in Hinduism and Buddhism; 2) wisdom-centred religions, in which the main figure is the “wise man”, as in Confucianism and Daoism; and 3) prophet-centred, as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>430</sup>

Javadi, however, classifies religions into two categories, revealed and non-revealed. Revealed religions are those that are rooted in the unseen world and whose teachings are based on revelation and divine commands. In these cases, according to Javadi, the religion is not the production of its founder's thoughts and ideals; rather, he is the receiver of divine messages. These messengers, who are regarded as exalted and immaculate, having received the divine commands via revelation, convey them to people without any alteration. Non-revealed religions are those that are not rooted in the unseen world. The founders of such religions neither consider themselves as prophets chosen by God nor claim that they convey His message.<sup>431</sup>

Obviously, the theologians of every religion are bound to state their viewpoints about the position of other religions. At times, they try to express the theological,

---

<sup>429</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 24; Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 22; Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 111; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3. 88.

<sup>430</sup> Küng, *Tracing the Way*. Xiii. Robert Ernest Hume proposes some other classifications. 1- Dead and living religions. 2- Geographical origin of religions. Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism emerged in Southern Asia. Confucianism, Taoism and Shinto arose from Eastern Asia. Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam from West Asia. 3- Classification according to the “date of their founders”. 4- Classification according to the number of their followers. 5- Classification according to their universality or non-universality. 6- Classification according to their notion of deity. 7- Classification according to the “numbers of deities”. 8- Classification according to their founders' personalities. Robert Ernest Hume, *The World's Living Religions : An Historical Sketch with Special Reference to their Sacred Scriptures and in Comparison with Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1959). 13-7. William P. Alston also refers to another classification of religions, namely, into the sacramental, the prophetic and the mystical. William P. Alston, “Religion,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (London/New York: The Macmillan Company/the Free Press, 1967). 141. Kraemer divides them into “Prophetic religions of revelation and naturalist religions of transempirical realization”. Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: James Clarke/Company LTD, 1961). 142.

<sup>431</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 26. Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 17.

jurisprudential and ethical relation between their own religion and other faiths. A Christian theologian, for instance, is obliged to prove the position of Christianity towards the religions that appeared before and after it, regardless of their origin as revealed or non-revealed faiths.

From another angle, if we liken religions to rings or links, a key question then is whether these rings form a strong chain or are simply scattered and isolated entities. What is the function of Christianity in the chain of religions? What is the special character of Christianity compared to other religions?

This part aims to investigate and answer the above questions from Javadi's perspective. It attempts to highlight the position and role of Islam in the chain of religions, as seen by Javadi. First, it will refer to non-revealed religions and then to revealed religions from different angles.

#### **4.2.3 The Validity of Non-Revealed Religions**

As has been noted, in the eyes of Javadi, the religious teachings of non-revealed religions do not originate from divine source. They are man-made phenomena and are production of their founders' thoughts. Javadi, like other early Muslim theologians, discusses the validity or invalidity of these religions.

One of the issues that engaged Muslim theologians in the course of time was the discussion about people's need for divine guidance and prophetic instructions. Theologically and historically, they tried to answer questions such as the following: Do the different and conflicting viewpoints of humankind on ethics, politics and family indicate people's need for infallible guidance? Is the intellectual capacity of human beings capable of leading them to greater welfare and otherworldly felicity? Are man and society in need of prophetic guidance? Can intellectual knowledge replace divine guidance? Can a person produce a religion without divine guidance?

To answer the above questions, Muslim theologians usually try first to refute what they regard to be the views of Hindu Brahmins whom they call Barahimah. Javadi is not an exception here. According to Muslim historians of world religions, like

Muhammad Shahrastani<sup>432</sup> (1085-1152), Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi<sup>433</sup> (994- 1064), and Abu Rayhan al-Biruni<sup>434</sup> (973- 1050), Barahimah denied the necessity of divine revelation for man's felicity. They argued that prophetic instructions either conform to the intellect or not. If they conform to intellectual teachings, it is obvious that there is no need for Prophets, since such wisdom can achieve the truth alone. If they contradict intellectual knowledge, reason will not accept them.<sup>435</sup> Ian G. Barbour also mentions the appearance of such schools of thought, referred to as deism, in the eighteenth century in the West when "natural theology" replaced revelation and "scripture was assigned a subordinate role".<sup>436</sup>

Javadi, as his predecessors, refutes this belief. Over the centuries, Muslim sages, mystics and theologians have attempted to take into consideration the necessity of divine prophethood from different angles. They have addressed the issue from both intra-religious (Qur'an and hadiths) and extra-religious (intellect) aspects. The very well-known and prolific writer, polymath, philosopher and theologian, Khajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274), analysed this issue comprehensively in *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*<sup>437</sup> and *Talkhis Al-Muhassal*.<sup>438</sup>

It seems that, amongst the Muslim thinkers, Abu Ali Sina, known as Avicenna in the West (980-1037), was the first person to discuss in detail the rational necessity of divine prophethood, a view which was later expanded by other Muslim thinkers. He argues that man is no doubt and naturally a social being.<sup>439</sup> He, through collaboration, is capable of providing solutions for many problems and meeting

<sup>432</sup> Shahrastani ascribes Barahimah to the school of thought which was established by Barham. Muhammad Al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, 1991). 601.

<sup>433</sup> Ali Ibn Hazm, *al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Jabal, 1983). 69.

<sup>434</sup> Al-Biruni Abu Rayhan, *Tahqiq ma li al-Hind*, trans. Manuchihr Saduqi (Tehran: Suha, 1983). 79.

<sup>435</sup> Al-Shahrastani, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, 2. 602. See also; Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsah* (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d). 380-1; Tahir Al-Isfara'ini, *al-Tabsir fi al-Din* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah, n.d). 62, 126.

<sup>436</sup> Barbour, *Religion and Science*. 36. See also; Barbour, *Issues in Science*. 21-2.

<sup>437</sup> Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (Qum: Daftar-i Tablighat-i Islami, 1986). 211-3.

<sup>438</sup> Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Talkhis al-Muhassal* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1985). 361-8.

<sup>439</sup> Abu Ali Sina, *al-Najat min al-Gharaq fi Bahr al-Dalalah* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, n.d). 708. The Qur'an considers men as social beings. It says, "O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes". 49:13; "It is He who created the human being from water, and then invested him with ties of blood and marriage". 25:54.



individual and social needs.<sup>440</sup> On the other hand, every society, in order to be conducted beneficially, requires laws and legislations,<sup>441</sup> for a lawless society will soon be plunged into chaos. Moreover, man, due to the irresistible instinct of self-preservation, would always tend to take advantage of others to his own benefit and, consequently, cannot be a proper legislator. In other words, his instinctual perspective will have a strong influence on his legislation. Taking these points into consideration, Avicenna concludes that God, the All-wise, is obliged to send His divine and vital laws and guidance via the select Prophets.<sup>442</sup> The laws not only frame the responsibilities of individuals in society but also can prevent them from focusing simply on personal gains. To Avicenna, man-made laws, that is to say, man-made religions, cannot secure the welfare of individuals and society. Therefore, non-revealed religions cannot be valid.

Such views were not limited to the Muslim world. Early Modern Period European thinkers used to think in the same lines, too. For example, Baron De Montesquieu (1689-1755) believed that since legislators are disposed of particular sentiments and special thoughts, they would impose their will on legislations. He says,

Aristotle wanted to indulge sometimes his jealousy against Plato, and sometimes his passion for Alexander. Plato was incensed against the tyranny of the people of Athens. Machiavel was full of his idol, the Duke of Valentinois. Sir Thomas More, who spoke rather of what he had read than of what he thought, wanted to govern all states with the simplicity of a Greek city. Harrington was full of the idea of his favourite republic of England, while a crowd of writers saw nothing but confusion where monarchy is abolished. The laws always conform to the passions and prejudices of the legislator; sometimes the latter pass through and only tincture them; sometimes they remain and are incorporated with them.<sup>443</sup>

Thus, Montesquieu distinguishes between human laws and divine laws. He holds that these two kinds of laws are different in terms of origin, object and nature. He adds,

It is in the nature of human laws to be subject to all the accidents which can happen, and to vary in proportion as the will of man changes; on the contrary, by the nature of the laws of religion, they are never to vary. Human laws appoint for some good; those of religion for the best: good may have another object, because there are many kinds of good; but the best

<sup>440</sup> Abu Ali Sina, *al-Shifa: al-Ilahiyyat* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, n.d). 441. See also; Sina, *al-Najat*. 708-9.

<sup>441</sup> Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996). 372.

<sup>442</sup> Sina, *al-Shifa*. 442. Javadi also clarifies Avicenna's viewpoint on the necessity of prophethood in a short essay. I have checked all the sources. See also; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishih*, 6 vols., vol. 4 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007). 218-238.

<sup>443</sup> Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent, 2 vols., vol. 2 (New York: Hafner Press, 1959). 170. See also; 'Adullah Nasri, *Mabani-yi Risalat-i Anbiya' dar Qur'an* (Tehran: Surush, 1998). 27.

is but one, it cannot therefore change. We may alter laws, because they are reputed no more than good; but the institutions of religion are always supposed to be the best.<sup>444</sup>

Along the lines of such arguments, Javadi holds that, in order to reach felicity in this and next life, man is in need of divine guidance; hence, non-revealed religions are not valid.<sup>445</sup> Javadi agrees that, from the Qur'anic perspective, revelation and reason are the two means by which we can achieve religious truth. Reason is even considered as one of the foundations of theology and jurisprudence, but it is also argued that, although essential and useful, intellect is not sufficient to lead man towards wellbeing and ultimate salvation. Even today's understandings of the origin of creation and the final destination of human being are beyond the scope of man's intellect. He adds that conflicting viewpoints on various issues, such as ethics and politics, reveal the incapacity of reason to arrive at truth. Based on the above points, Javadi concludes that the laws made by people are not immune from errors. Moreover, the self-preservation instinct would in effect prevent people from making and arriving at neutral laws.<sup>446</sup>

In his *Din Shinasi*, Javadi provides another classification of religions. He states that religions can be divided into two types: true and false. A true religion is one whose all teachings are based on knowledge and certainty.<sup>447</sup> This means that all the religious beliefs and rulings should be provable with definitive and well-founded evidence, that is to say, decisive divine revelation or intellect. A false religion, on the

---

<sup>444</sup> Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 2. 58-9. See also; Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A.H.C. Downes (London: Sheed/Ward, 1936). 358. It seems that Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the French philosopher and writer, also draw on this point. He holds that men are in need of divine laws. He says "in order to discover the rules of society best suited to nations, a superior intelligence, beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them, would be needed. This intelligence would have to be wholly unrelated to our nature, while knowing it through and through; its happiness would have to be independent of us, and yet ready to occupy itself with ours; and lastly, it would have, in the march of time, to look forward to a distant glory, and, working in one century, to be able to enjoy in the next". In the light of what has been mentioned, Rousseau concludes that only God can make perfect laws for men. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (London/Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1920). 46. See also; Nasri, *Mabani-yi Risalat*. 28.

<sup>445</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Qur'an-i Karim az Manzar-i Imam Rida* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007). 184-5; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3. 20-6.

<sup>446</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3. 21. See also; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 21 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 387; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishih*, 6 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2006). 372.

<sup>447</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 28.

other hand, is, as Javadi says, a religion whose teachings are either wholly or partly not true.<sup>448</sup>

Javadi holds that man cannot be immune from mental and volitional errors and, consequently, cannot frame infallible laws and realistic ideas about God.<sup>449</sup> It is clear that the teachings of non-revealed religions are the production of man. On the other hand, any production of man, due to his fallibility, is not free from errors and mistakes. From Javadi's perspective, therefore, a non-revealed religion cannot be valid and reliable. In the eyes of Javadi, reason proves that man is in need of comprehensive and perfect truth and reliable laws from God.<sup>450</sup> It is undeniable, as Watt states, that "there is much truth in all great religions"<sup>451</sup>, but, as Watt indirectly admits, not all their teachings are true. Such religions, in the eyes of Javadi, should be categorised as a false religion. For Javadi, only revealed religions can be valid and reliable.

However, for Javadi, revelation is not restricted to one religion only. According to him, there are several revealed religions, including Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Are they all true? What is the relation between these religions? Are they wholly inclusive or wholly or partly exclusive? These are the questions that we now turn to answer Javadi's point of view.

#### **4.2.4 The validity of Revealed Religions**

The unity or diversity of religions is one of the issues that have been accorded a remarkable debate in the philosophy of religion. Over the centuries, theologians have attempted to address this matter from different angles. Javadi, as has been mentioned before, classifies religions into two types, revealed and non-revealed. According to him, since revelation plays a great role in the life and salvation of humankind, non-revealed religions can be neither reliable nor valid. Hence, for Javadi, non-revealed religions are not regarded as religions at all and are not included in his discussions regarding the diversity of religions. In contrast to non-revealed religions, Javadi

---

<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3. 25-6.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>451</sup> Watt, *Religious Truth*.7.

accepts the diversity of revealed religions. This part aims to address the reasons for such diversity from Javadi's perspective. First, we look at the classification of the Prophets and the reasons for their great numbers.

#### 4.2.4.1 Classification of Divine Prophets

Javadi believes that diversity in revealed religions is caused by different reasons. According to a traditional Muslim view, God has sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets.<sup>452</sup> These Prophets, in turn, can be divided into two types: Major Prophets (*Ulu al-ʿAzm*) and Minor Prophets (non-*Ulu al-ʿAzm*). Major Prophets are those to whom God gave a divine Book.<sup>453</sup> Each Book, according to the Islamic viewpoint, reveals a collection of the fundamental principles of religious beliefs, rulings, and ethics.<sup>454</sup> According to the Qur'an<sup>455</sup> and hadiths, as Javadi states, such Books have been given to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, all Major Prophets.<sup>456</sup> Minor Prophets, on the other hand, are those to whom God did not give such a book and who were merely guardians and preachers of previous Major Prophets' teachings.<sup>457</sup> Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Jonah, Job, Aaron, Solomon and David are Minor Prophets.<sup>458</sup>

Another difference between the two is the universal nature of Major Prophets' missions versus the limited missions of Minor Prophets. The messages of Major Prophets were for all people at all places<sup>459</sup> whilst the mission of the Minor Prophets was limited to a specific era or area. In summary, the Major Prophets benefit from

<sup>452</sup> Muhammad Al-Saduq, *al-Iʿtiqadat* (Qum: al-Muʿtamar al-ʿAlami li al-Shaykh al-Mufid, n.d). 92-3. See also; Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 111 vols., vol. 11 (Beirut Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-ʿArabi, 1982). 30, 58, 32 and 28.

<sup>453</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawduʿi*, 6. 251; Muhammad Al-Saduq, *ʿIlal al-Sharayiʿ*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Davari, 1996). 122-3.

<sup>454</sup> ʿAbdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qurʿan-i Karim*, vol. 2 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Israʿ, 2010). 135-6; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawduʿi*, 6. 364. See also; ʿAbdullah Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Israʿ, 2009). 185.

<sup>455</sup> *The Qurʿan*. 42:13.

<sup>456</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2. 135-6. See also; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, 11. 32, 56; Al-Saduq, *ʿIlal al-Sharayiʿ*, 1. 149.

<sup>457</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2. 136.

<sup>458</sup> *Ibid.*, 10. 472-3; *ibid.*, 14. 232. See also; *The Qurʿan*. 3:163.

<sup>459</sup> ʿAbdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qurʿan-i Karim*, vol. 12 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Israʿ, 2009). 84. See also; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, 11. 32-3. Earle Edwin Cairns holds that the message of the gospel was universal. Earle Edwin Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*, 3 ed. (Michigan: Zondervan, 1996). 19.

two main distinctive features, that is, a divine Book (*shari'ah*) and the universality of their missions. However, for Javadi, none of these would constitute diversity since the gist of all these books and the mission for which all these Prophets were sent should all converge to the same thing. So, where does the diversity come from? Javadi tries to explain that by stipulating the following factors.

#### **4.2.4.2 The Reasons for the Huge Number of the Divine Prophets**

The essential question that comes to mind is why God sent so many Prophets. According to the verse “Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed,”<sup>460</sup> Javadi believes that from the beginning of the world, humankind had a very simple life. They knew the main principles of the ontology, epistemology and the conception of the world through their God-given instinct (*fitrah*) and reason. Due to the simplicity of their life and their instinctive knowledge, they did not have any problems or disputes. They used to refer their problems and questions to the Prophets’ divine guidance. Therefore, there was no need for any codified laws or books. Gradually, the increase in population, the expansion of empirical sciences and the emergence of different ideas and schools led to disputes amongst humans in the domain of beliefs and conducts. Thus, in order to distinguish between the truth and falsehood and to describe public welfare, they required laws and books.<sup>461</sup>

Javadi, referring to some commentators, concludes that the “single community” in the above-mentioned verse refers to the people who were between the time of Prophet Adam and Prophet Noah. In this period, there was not any divine Book; however, this does not imply that they were not in need of divine revelation. With the emergence of disputes, according to the verse “He has prescribed for you the religion which He had enjoined upon Noah”<sup>462</sup> and some authentic narrations, God sent His

---

<sup>460</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:213.

<sup>461</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 384.

<sup>462</sup> *The Qur'an*. 42:13.

first Book through Prophet Noah.<sup>463</sup> But other Scriptures were revealed after Noah and a great number of other Prophets were sent. The factors that caused the multiplicity of the Scriptures and the constant provision of Prophets are deemed by Javadi to be as follows.

#### 4.2.4.2.1 Distortion

According to Javadi, the divine Prophets conveyed God's messages clearly and in a precise manner; however, over the years, the revealed teachings were subject to misinterpretations and interpolations. Thus, the true messages were ignored or changed and there was a vital need for a new prophet to revive the previously revealed Scripture. However, Javadi establishes this fact by merely referring to the Qur'anic verses<sup>464</sup>, which can be valid for Muslims only. According to the verse "We did not send down the Book to *you* except [for the purpose] that *you* may clarify for them what they differ about",<sup>465</sup> God has sent Prophet Muhammad with the Book to clarify the distortions in previous Books.

The Qur'an testifies that some of the religious beliefs of previous Prophets were subjected to distortion. For instance, angels were viewed as God's daughters<sup>466</sup>, 'Uzayr and Jesus as the sons of God<sup>467</sup> and Jesus as God Himself.<sup>468</sup> Moreover, the religious rulings were subjected to interpolation as well.<sup>469</sup> Javadi refers to some of the causes of the distortions and argues that ancient man, lacking the right mental and reasoning abilities, could not protect divine Books, and this inability led to distortions in them. This situation necessitated sending new prophets.<sup>470</sup>

<sup>463</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 385. See also; Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur*, 6 vols., vol. 6 (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1983). 4; Hashim Al-Bahrani, *al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 5 vols., vol. 4 (Tehran: Bunyad-i Bi'that, 1995). 810-2.

<sup>464</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 258. See also; *The Qur'an*. 5:13.

<sup>465</sup> *The Qur'an*. 16:64.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid. 17:40.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. 9:30.

<sup>468</sup> Ibid. 5:17. For more information see; John B Noss, *Man's Religions*, 7 ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984). 440-42; Joann O'Grady, *Early Christian Heresies* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985). 8-15.

<sup>469</sup> *The Qur'an*. 6:140.

<sup>470</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-4. See also; Murtada Mutahhari, *Vahy va Nubuvvat* (Qum: Sadra, 1987). 48.

Based on what has been mentioned, divine wisdom, as Javadi concludes, implies that when such distortions happen, God should send a new prophet in order to clarify what has been distorted or misinterpreted. The verse “O, people of the Book! Certainly Our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you used to hide of the Book”,<sup>471</sup> clearly highlights the duty of Prophets to remove any distortions or misinterpretations.<sup>472</sup>

#### 4.2.4.2.1.1 The Capacity and Ability of Man for Learning

Javadi holds that man, over the centuries, has gradually directed himself towards the path of perfection. Thus, the capacity of his intelligence and learning, due to his efforts, has increased, so that his present knowledge and capacity is not comparable to that of man in ancient times. Therefore, the Prophets, due to lack of man’s capacity, could not draw a full and complete map of his destination. They had to take him forward step-by-step. Divine Prophets, according to a hadith from Prophet Muhammad were supposed to teach people according to their intelligence and learning<sup>473</sup> and were obliged to teach them stage-by-stage, leading them towards their destination. In other words, each prophet was facing a kind of limitation in terms of their audience’s ability to learn and accept. They, consequently, could not convey more than what their audience could acquire and understand.<sup>474</sup>

In short, every *shari‘ah* faces two problems: limitations in the understanding of its audience and the danger of distortions. In this way, each Major Prophet had two responsibilities: improving the religion and removing distortions. As people’s understanding improved, each new Major Prophet would introduce concepts and practices which could not have been taught before. The new Prophet was also responsible for clearing up the distortions and misinterpretations. Javadi explains that each new *shari‘ah* was at the same time an improvement over the previous

---

<sup>471</sup> *The Qur’an*. 5:15.

<sup>472</sup> Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur’an-i Karim*, vol. 13 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2010). 171-178. See also; *ibid.*, 21. 63-4.

<sup>473</sup> Muhammad Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 8 vols., vol. 1 (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986). 23.

<sup>474</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-4; *ibid.*, 6. 218-9; *ibid.*, 13. 452-3.

one.<sup>475</sup> Yet, the role of Minor Prophets was to remove corruptions and distortions without bringing anything new or improving the previous *shari‘ah*.<sup>476</sup>

Apparently, Javadi, due to his philosophical and mystical background, took such an argument from the great masters of Islamic mysticism and great philosophers. Ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240), in one of his mystical books, refers to the philosophy of religious diversity and states that the discrepancy between the religions stems from the diversity of nations.<sup>477</sup> Davud Qaysari (d.1350), an exponent of Ibn ‘Arabi’s school, states that the principle teachings of the Prophets are the same and the marginal differences are due to the diversity of their communities. The diversity of communities is due to the fact that people of every age have a different collective capacity which is caused by the capacity of the individuals of that age. This is why the *shari‘ahs* of the Prophets in different eras differ from each other.<sup>478</sup> Also Sadr al-Din states that human societies have constantly progressed in their capacity for knowledge and understanding. As such, the more developed societies deserved new and more advanced systems of *shari‘ah*.<sup>479</sup>

As can be seen, Ibn ‘Arabi and Sadr al-Din believe that the growth of human communities over centuries requires new laws and *shari‘ahs*.

#### 4.2.4.2.1.2 Scattered Population

Javadi, according to the verse “Certainly We raised an apostle in every nation,”<sup>480</sup> holds that all the scattered nations of the earth should have had their own ‘apostle’. God’s mercy and justice require that all nations and communities should benefit from the divine guidance of Prophets. Since nations and communities were scattered in the world at that time, He was obliged to send many Prophets.<sup>481</sup>

---

<sup>475</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-4.

<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 13. 60.

<sup>477</sup> Muhy al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi, *Fusus al-Hikam*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Cairo: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyyah, 1949). 47.

<sup>478</sup> Davud Qaysari, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* (Tehran: Intisharat-i ‘Ilmi va Farhangi, 1996). 300.

<sup>479</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 2. 458, 424; *ibid.*, 1. 566-8.

<sup>480</sup> *The Qur’an*. 16:36; 35:24 and 13:7.

<sup>481</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i*, 6. 47-9.



The above factors were, in the eyes of Javadi, instrumental in the multiplicity of Scriptures and profuse numbers of Prophets sent by God. But what about the contents of their teachings? Were they all the same or different? Javadi's answer to this question is explored next.

#### **4.2.4.3 Pluralism and the Diversity of Religions**

Javadi's view regarding religions is more traditional than modern. He, at the beginning, analyses the tri-polar typology of Hick, exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.<sup>482</sup> As we discussed before, according to religious exclusivists, only one particular (i.e. their own) religion holds the truth and can lead its followers to salvation. They do not completely reject the possibility of truth in other faiths, but they maintain that only the followers of their own tradition can reach salvation. Therefore, the adherents of other traditions, no matter how pious and sincere they may be, cannot attain salvation.<sup>483</sup> Inclusivists hold that there is only one true religion—Christianity, for instance—but unlike exclusivists, they maintain that the believers of other traditions may also attain salvation as “anonymous Christians”.<sup>484</sup> Religious pluralists claim that all major religions contain truth and can provide salvation for their followers.<sup>485</sup>

Having referred to Hick's triple classification of religions, Javadi starts his argument with the following questions: Is the diversity of religions rationally and theologically feasible or can religion not accept plurality? Is it rationally possible to consider two or more different religions to be true and, consequently, will their followers practising different paths and rules be saved? Can salvation be achievable through different paths and different practices? Can the adherents of every religion consider themselves as saved people on the Day of Judgement? Can we have a peaceful coexistence with the followers of other religions?<sup>486</sup>

---

<sup>482</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 185-6.

<sup>483</sup> Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 31

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. 32-3.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid. 34.

<sup>486</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 186.

As the teachings of revealed religions can be divided into tenets and precepts, Javadi attempts to reflect upon the diversity of revealed religions from two aspects: 1) pluralism and the diversity of beliefs (*usul-i din*); 2) pluralism and the diversity of *shari'ahs* (religious rulings). He then addresses a third question in the plurality of religions, i.e. 3) pluralism and peaceful coexistence.<sup>487</sup>

#### 4.2.4.3.1 Javadi and the Diversity of Religious Beliefs

God, as Javadi explained, only sent five Books for the guidance of man.<sup>488</sup> One of the preoccupations of Javadi, therefore, is to find the relationship between religious beliefs of these books. He asks if these books, in terms of religious beliefs, follow one line and convey the same messages.

Javadi holds that there is not any difference between the religious beliefs of all the Prophets. This means that all the foundations and principles of their beliefs are equal and the same.<sup>489</sup> He adds that the Qur'an does not present new principles or viewpoints, but rather depicts and clarifies the previous principles that were revealed to the previous Prophets.<sup>490</sup> To Javadi, the unity of religious beliefs of the Prophets is delineated in the Qur'an and hadiths, and, consequently, the diversity of religious beliefs is inconceivable.

Referring to the verse "He has prescribed for you the religion which He had enjoined upon Noah and which We have [also] revealed to you, and which We had enjoined upon Abraham, Moses and Jesus, declaring, 'Maintain the religion, and do not be divided in it'",<sup>491</sup> Javadi maintains that each prophet is a link in a coherent and united stream that attempts to preach one message. This message is named *islam*.<sup>492</sup> On the

---

<sup>487</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 211-3.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 10. 471.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 2. 195; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 7 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 71; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 22 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 544.

<sup>490</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 533; *ibid.*, 21. 360.

<sup>491</sup> *The Qur'an*. 42:13.

<sup>492</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 216. See also; *ibid.*, 2. 61.

other hand, since they were required to preach one message, according to the Qur'an, they promised to confirm and support any coming prophets.<sup>493</sup> The Qur'an states,

‘When Allah took a compact concerning the prophets, [He said,] " Inasmuch as I have given you of the Book and wisdom, should an apostle come to you thereafter confirming what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him." He said," Do you pledge and accept My covenant on this condition?" They said," We pledge".<sup>494</sup>

This verse indicates that all Prophets were obliged to believe in and assist the next prophet.<sup>495</sup> The question might arise as to how a Major Prophet could assist a future Major Prophet. Usually a new prophet with a Book came after the demise of the previous prophet with a large gap between them. For instance, Prophet Muhammad came about six hundred years after Prophet Jesus. It should be noted that, here, “assistance”, as Javadi explains, means that the previous Major Prophets would pave the way by giving good tidings and acknowledging the identity and signs of the new prophet.<sup>496</sup> The Qur'an claims that Jesus prepared his adherents for the coming of Muhammad. Javadi states that the Jews and Christians, consequently, via their own Scripture recognized Muhammad.<sup>497</sup> The Qur'an says: “Those whom We have given the Book recognize him just as they recognize their sons”.<sup>498</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that prophethood represents a coherent and united stream in which Prophets vindicate each other. The great cooperation of the divine Prophets, as the Qur'an shows, indicates that they have one goal and convey one message.

Javadi holds that not only were they obliged to confirm each other, but also, according to the verse “Abraham enjoined this [creed] upon his children, and [so did] Jacob, [saying], ‘My children! Allah has indeed chosen this religion for you; so never die except as Muslims,’”<sup>499</sup> they used to advise their children to follow that coherent stream, *islam*. There are other Qur'anic verses which can prove that there is a strong relationship amongst the Prophets.<sup>500</sup>

---

<sup>493</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 216-7

<sup>494</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:81.

<sup>495</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 215-7.

<sup>496</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 69.

<sup>497</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 434.

<sup>498</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:146.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.* 2:132.

<sup>500</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 215-7. See also; *ibid.*, 2. 61. Javadi provides verses such as 2: 128, 2: 133.

Thus, for Javadi, although the Prophets were different in terms of the place and time of their missions, their teachings were harmonious and in agreement with one another. Moreover, he attempts to prove the unity of the Prophets' teachings from another angle, although, as above, it is a view deduced from his own religious book only. He provides evidence from the Qur'an about the way of life of the Prophets, individually and socially. According to the Qur'an, they followed common methods and procedures in their lives and missions. These unified methods can prove that their teachings are in harmony. Javadi deduces twenty-four common characteristics and methods of the Prophets from numerous verses, including 1) they were exalted individuals and selected by God<sup>501</sup>; 2) all nations had a prophet<sup>502</sup>; 3) the Prophets employed the languages of their own nation<sup>503</sup>; 4) they performed miracles<sup>504</sup>; 5) they were infallible in receiving and conveying the divine messages;<sup>505</sup> and 6) they all call people to believe in the unity of God in His essence, in His attributes, in His creation, in His governance, in His worship and in His legislation.<sup>506</sup> Javadi concludes that these twenty-four common methods and characteristics reveal that their teachings cannot be different and inharmonious.

The Qur'an holds that all Prophets, as Javadi states, attempt to fulfil the common aims of prophethood such as teaching the principle of the unity of God<sup>507</sup>, and establishing the foundation of justice.<sup>508</sup> If all these divine Prophets were obliged to attain such common purposes, their divine guidance should be in harmony.

Furthermore, Javadi attempts to prove the unchangeability of religious beliefs of all the revealed Prophets through the *fitrah* (the inborn nature). He holds that, on the one hand, the divine religious beliefs were established according to and in conformity with the human *fitrah*. On the other hand, since man's *fitrah* is permanent and immutable, the religious beliefs of the Major Prophets cannot be changed or abrogated by the next Prophets. Javadi adds that this is the reason why Prophet

---

<sup>501</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 43. See also; *The Qur'an*. 22:75 and 3:33-4.

<sup>502</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 45-6. See also; *The Qur'an*. 35:24 and 16:36.

<sup>503</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 50-4. See also; *The Qur'an*. 14:3.

<sup>504</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 56-60. See also; *The Qur'an*. 57:25.

<sup>505</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 60-2.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid. 62.

<sup>507</sup> *The Qur'an*. 16:36.

<sup>508</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 62. See also; *The Qur'an*. 10:47 and 57:25.

Muhammad confirmed the religious beliefs of the previous Prophets,<sup>509</sup> as the Qur'an states, "He has sent down to you the Book with the truth confirming what was [revealed] before it".<sup>510</sup> Javadi, accordingly, maintains that all the Prophets presented one religion, and that is *islam*.<sup>511</sup> For Javadi, the religious beliefs of each prophet, therefore, in comparison with the previous one, is more complete and precise.<sup>512</sup> The minor dissimilarities refer to some religious practices that will be discussed later.

In the light of what has been presented above, it can be concluded that there can be no variation between the religious beliefs of the Prophets. In other words, for Javadi, the principles and foundations of their beliefs are one and the same. Prophet Muhammad does not introduce new principles or creeds, but rather clarifies the previous viewpoints that were conveyed to the previous Prophets. Therefore, the unity of religious beliefs of the divine Prophets has been figured in the Qur'an and hadiths, and, consequently, the plurality of beliefs in revealed religions is refuted by the rule of reason.

This is the case so far as religious beliefs or tenets of faith are concerned. With regard to religious practice or *shari'ah*, however, Javadi has slightly different view, as we will see below.

#### 4.2.4.3.2 Javadi and the Diversity of *Shari'ahs*

Javadi first refers to the literal meaning of *shari'ah* as outlined by prominent Arab philologists. The term *shari'ah* comes from the root word *sh.r.'a*, and literarily means a path that leads the seekers of water to the river.<sup>513</sup> It has come to refer, in theological parlance, to the series of compiled religious commands and prohibitions of Major Prophets for their followers to practise accordingly.<sup>514</sup> If all these religious laws of the divine Prophets are named as *shari'ahs*, it is because these laws look like

<sup>509</sup> Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 13. 455-7; *ibid.*, 22. 544 ; *ibid.*, 14. 718.

<sup>510</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:3.

<sup>511</sup> Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 5. 111-2, 526, 533; *ibid.*, 2. 61; Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 7. 116-7; *ibid.*, 12. 81; Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 14. 536-7; *ibid.*, 13. 434-5.

<sup>512</sup> Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 13. 457-8.

<sup>513</sup> Muhammad Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-'Arab*, 15 vols., vol. 8 (Bruit: Dar al-Sadir, 1993). 176; Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *al-Mufradat*. 450.

<sup>514</sup> Javadi, *Tasnīm*, 2. 131; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 145-6.

the path that can lead to the wellspring of eternal life.<sup>515</sup> While religion is composed of beliefs and practices, *shari'ah* only refers to the practices. *Shari'ah*, therefore, is more particular than religion.

According to the verse “For each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path,”<sup>516</sup> Javadi holds that the Qur'an partly confirms the diversity of *shari'ahs* amongst Major Prophets.<sup>517</sup> However, the important questions come to mind about the relationship between these divine *shari'ahs*. Why has God sent five *shari'ahs*? What are the similarities and differences amongst them? Are the differences fundamental? Can we consider any of them to be superior to or more valid than the other?

Javadi contends that there are similar religious rulings in all revealed *shari'ahs*. By similarity, he means that the central principles of religious practices such as the obligation of worshiping God, the donation of wealth, and the prohibition of injustice and usury are the same in all divine laws. These principles are not changeable or susceptible to abrogation. Yet there are some differences in the details and conditions of these principles amongst the divine *shari'ahs*.<sup>518</sup> The Qur'an, for instance, tells us that all the Prophets call upon man to worship God.<sup>519</sup> Therefore, worshiping God is a principle that is held in common by all divine *shari'ahs*.<sup>520</sup>

The Qur'an, as Javadi states, not only explains the religious practices of Prophet Muhammad's *shari'ah*, but also mentions the religious rulings of previous Books.<sup>521</sup> Qur'an's various historical accounts indicate that the religious rulings of the Holy Books of the three revealed religions are not equal but coherent. The Qur'an clearly

---

<sup>515</sup> Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *al-Mufradat*. 450. See also; Ahmad Al-Fiyumi, *al-Misbah al-Munir*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Dar al-Hijrah, 1993). 310. See also; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 579.

<sup>516</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5: 48.

<sup>517</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 178; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7 vols., vol. 6 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 243-250.

<sup>518</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 118-122. See also; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 213; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 71; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 544-5; *ibid.*, 13. 456-7.

<sup>519</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:72, 117. See also; 7:59, 65, 73, 85 and 11:50, 61.

<sup>520</sup> Javadi mentions more common principles amongst the revealed *shari'ahs* from the Qur'an. See; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 455-7.

<sup>521</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 71.

states that prayer does not exclusively belong to Prophet Muhammad's *shari'ah*, but that all the Prophets were obliged to maintain prayers in their own communities.<sup>522</sup>

For instance, Prophet Abraham, in order to maintain prayer, settled some of his descendants in the uncultivated valley near the Sacred House in Mecca.<sup>523</sup> For Prophets Shu'ayb<sup>524</sup> and Jesus,<sup>525</sup> prayer was one of the outstanding religious rulings. Prophet Ismael also ordered his family to maintain prayer.<sup>526</sup> Fasting is also one of the important religious rulings in Islam. The Qur'an clearly states that it was compulsory in previous *shari'ahs* as well. The Qur'an says, "O you who have faith! Prescribed for you is fasting as it was prescribed for those who were before you".<sup>527</sup>

However, Javadi claims that although the central principles of the revealed *shari'ahs* are the same, there are some differences in the conditions and manners of these laws. The manners and conditions of praying, for instance, are different in Islam and Christianity.<sup>528</sup> Javadi adds that these differences stem from differences in the characteristics of people and their time and place. He adds, however, that these dissimilarities never mean the plurality of religions. Javadi likens the dissimilarities amongst the divine *shari'ahs* to the two different medications that may be prescribed to treat someone in two different situations. In one situation, the patient is in need of one type of medication, and, in another time, due to some conditions, another medicine is the healer. Javadi concludes that these different prescriptions never imply that the doctor changes the principle of medicine or his mind.<sup>529</sup> Thus, on the margin of the immutable religious laws of all *shari'ahs*, there can be certain minor laws which, due to the influence of time, place and the specific features of people, are subject to change. Javadi's view in this respect is similar to that of William Montgomery Watt, who referring to the same fact, states that God changed some of religious commands from previous *shari'ahs* due to some unique circumstances in

---

<sup>522</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 545-6.

<sup>523</sup> *The Qur'an*. 14:37.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid. 11:87.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid. 19:31.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid. 19:55.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid. 2:183. See; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 545; *ibid.*, 13. 66. For a very comparative study on the similarities and dissimilarities between Judaism, Christianity and Islam see; Mahdi Muhsiniyan Rad, *Hanjarha dar Si Kitab-i Muqaddas: Turat, Injil va Qur'an* (Qum: Intisharat-i Adyan va Madhahib, 2013).

<sup>528</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 300.

<sup>529</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 118-9.

every community. He states that His laws, in the Old Testament, are always “suited to the social forms existing in a community”.<sup>530</sup>

In the light of what Javadi states, we may conclude that religious rulings represent an important principle held in common by all revealed *shari'ahs*. Moreover, the main headings of religious laws, that is to say, commands and prohibitions such as fasting, prayer, and donation are common in them. It is obvious that the conditions and manners of religious laws are different. However, the central principles of religious rulings are the same. They are not changeable or abrogable, and only the details and the precise execution of these laws, due to some conditions, can be changeable. These minor dissimilarities between the divine *shari'ahs* never imply the plurality of religions. Now the main question that Javadi has to answer is what are the reasons for such coherence and persistence?

#### **4.2.4.3.2.1 The Rationale for the Unchangeability of the Main Religious Laws**

It is quite natural to ask why the central principles of the religious acts of divine *shari'ahs* cannot be changed or abrogated. The aim of this part is to address the rationale for the unchangeability of religious laws in the eyes of Javadi. Since the unchangeability of religious practices depends on man's inborn nature (*fitrah*), it is necessary to address the conventional meaning of *fitrah* first.

##### **4.2.4.3.2.1.1 Definition of *Fitrah***

Javadi, referring to some Qur'anic verses,<sup>531</sup> believes that faith in God is embedded in the innermost nature of man. That is why everybody, Muslim or non-Muslim, in a critical situation and overcome by despair, tends towards God.<sup>532</sup> This innermost nature is called *fitrah*.

---

<sup>530</sup> Watt, *Religious Truth*. 70, 7

<sup>531</sup> See, *The Qur'an*. 6:40-1. See also; 29:65.

<sup>532</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 209-16. See also; Muhammad Sadr al-Din, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad* (Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat-i Iran, n.d). 23-4.



The term *fitrah*, which is derived from the Qur'an,<sup>533</sup> can be translated, as William C. Chittick states, as "original disposition".<sup>534</sup> In theological parlance, it is, as Javadi says, a special characteristic of human beings that predisposes them towards divine religion. In other words, it is an inner guide that acquaints man with religious truth. For Javadi, man has already been taught this knowledge by his inner prophet.<sup>535</sup> It is an instinctual knowledge that man knows self-evidently and intuitively without any prior learning. This intrinsic discernment has two important characteristics. Firstly, it is not in need of education: it rather stems from the nature of man. Secondly, it is definite and indubitable.<sup>536</sup> Religious teachings are a positive response to this innate knowledge which is called *fitrah*. The Qur'an, Javadi adds, shows that nature is not subject to change or alteration although many people are not aware of this fact.<sup>537</sup> The Qur'an says, "There is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know".<sup>538</sup>

As is clear, Javadi's arguments here as elsewhere are purely faith-based and draw only on the verse of the Qur'an and Shi'ah narrations.<sup>539</sup> Some of these narrations were collected by al-Shaykh al-Saduq (918-991). In the interpretation of "the origination of Allah [*fitrat Allah*] according to which He originated mankind",<sup>540</sup> he reports a narration saying that the phrase *fitrat Allah* suggests that everyone has been created with the pure primordial nature. Another hadith tells us that it means that everyone has been born with an Islamic nature.<sup>541</sup> Another hadith states that *fitrat Allah* refers to the fact that man innately knows God.<sup>542</sup>

Religious teachings of revealed religions, in the eyes of Javadi, are rooted in the *fitrah* and, therefore, there is supreme harmony between the inner prophet (the *fitrah*) and the external prophets (who provide divine revelation). In other words, it is

---

<sup>533</sup> *The Qur'an*. 30:30.

<sup>534</sup> William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). 51.

<sup>535</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 25.

<sup>536</sup> Sina, *al-Najat*. 117.

<sup>537</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 146-9.

<sup>538</sup> *The Qur'an*. 30:30.

<sup>539</sup> See; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 70.

<sup>540</sup> *The Qur'an*. 30:30.

<sup>541</sup> Muhammad Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 8 vols., vol. 2 (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986). 12.

See also; Muhammad Al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid* (Qum: Jami'i-yi Mudarrisin, 1977). 329.

<sup>542</sup> Al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid*. 330. See also; *ibid.* 331; Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 2. 13.

impossible to find any religious laws that do not spring from the *fitrah* or to find any intuitive knowledge that contradicts religious laws, for any conflict between them is against divine wisdom.

Javadi holds that the *fitrah* possesses these distinctive features: a) the *fitrah* is an integral part of man and its intrinsic guidance stems from the depths of his soul. In other words, he does not learn it, but rather possesses it as instinctive knowledge. b) Intrinsic guidance cannot be changed by force; it is, therefore, permanent and unchangeable, but it can be weakened by sins or external forces. c) It is universal, that is to say, everybody has been created with this primordial nature.<sup>543</sup>

In sum, the *fitrah* can be defined as the principle held in common between all human beings: we have all been born with this primordial nature. Secondly, human beings naturally know God and follow only His religion. Thirdly, the *fitrah* is permanent and unchangeable.<sup>544</sup> Now we have to see how Javadi proves the unchangeability of religious rulings in the light of *fitrah*.

#### **4.2.4.3.2.1.2 The *Fitrah* and the Unchangeability of Religious Laws**

As we saw, for Javadi, the religious beliefs and the central principles of the religious practices of revealed religions are the same. They cannot be subject to change or abrogation. He attempts to substantiate his claim by referring to man's nature. He maintains that a) all the religious beliefs and central principles of religious rulings of the Prophets conform to man's *fitrah* and b) man's *fitrah*, in the course of human history, is not changeable. From these two premises, he concludes that the divine *din* is not changeable. In other words, the *din* that consists of beliefs, morals, laws and rules, was demanded by the *fitrah*. On the other hand, since man's *fitrah* has not been and will not be changed, the divine religion cannot be changed.<sup>545</sup> The first premise of his argument, that is to say, the conformability of divine teachings to the *fitrah*,

---

<sup>543</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 26.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid. 27-8.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid. 145; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 9 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 592; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 415; *ibid.*, 17. 123-6; Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 178; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Islam va Muhit-i Zist* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 310.

was discussed before. Now it is appropriate to investigate the second premise, that is, the unchangeability of man's *fitrah* over the course of time.

#### **4.2.4.3.2.1.2.1 The Stability of Man's *Fitrah***

As Javadi claims, evidence bears testimony to the fact that all human beings make one kind. He proves this specific unity of man with some practical evidence. All mankind, in all times and all places, has engaged in exchanging ideas, cultures and signing treaties and agreements. The same disciplines and sciences have been taught in universities around the world. Different students, from different nations, cultures and sects sit together in the universities and make use of the knowledge taught to them. This universality shows that mankind does not possess different natures, but rather one nature with diverse forms.

Javadi maintains that other practical evidence can prove the unity of man's nature, too. Everybody is waiting for global unity in the world. Everybody is expecting the coming forth of a global reformer to establish universal justice. Javadi concludes that the unanimity of man's desires and aspirations shows that they are united in nature. If men possessed different natures, their expectations would be different. He adds that since all people are very keen that societies should be conducted by one legal system, it shows that everybody has accepted that they are one in nature.<sup>546</sup> We see that the United Nations or other international associations plan for all nations and defend the human rights of all human beings; this shows that all humankind is one reality. It is clear that if man had different and diverse realities, the determination of one law and one plan for billions of different people would be in vain.<sup>547</sup>

Javadi adds that we see the experiences of previous generations provided the pillars of development for the current generation and, on the other hand, the experiences of the current generation will make for the progress of the next generations. This shows that all humankind, in all times and places, belongs to the same type. If the individuals of previous and current generations were of two types, the experience of

---

<sup>546</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 151-3.

<sup>547</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Sirat va Surat-i Insan dar Qur'an*, 19 vols., vol. 14 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2002). 90-1.

one type could not prepare the way for the development of another. In other words, if man, in each age, makes use of the knowledge and experience of the past generation, it proves that all human beings, in all times and places, is one in nature, not a genus with different natures.<sup>548</sup>

Javadi adds that the Qur'an, in the same manner, proves that all human beings have one reality. It, in many verses, considers Prophet Muhammad as a messenger for all humankind. It says, "We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and warner to all mankind".<sup>549</sup> Moreover, the Qur'an has been sent "as guidance to mankind".<sup>550</sup> The Sacred Mosque, on the other hand, has been named as the first blessed "house to be set up for mankind", for the "guidance for all nations".<sup>551</sup> If, therefore, the Prophet, the Book and the Sacred House of all humanity are one, it means that all of human society is one reality according to the Qur'an.<sup>552</sup>

Javadi, moreover, believes that since the revealed religion is universal, that is to say, it is for all mankind and all times, all mankind should be of one type. He adds that if men were of different types, it would be impossible to issue one law for them.<sup>553</sup> In other words, the universality of religion implies the specific unity of man in nature. Javadi attempts to clarify the reason why the Qur'an refers to the term *din* (religion) in the singular form in many verses such as "Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam".<sup>554</sup> He contends that, since the religious teachings were revealed in accordance with man's *fitrah* and the *fitrah* is a permanent entity, religious beliefs and the main principles of religious laws, that is, *din*, are unchangeable. This is the reason why the term religion is used in the Qur'an in the singular form.<sup>555</sup>

In summary, all the divine religious teachings were revealed in accordance with man's *fitrah*, and, since the *fitrah* is permanent, religious beliefs and the central principles of religious practices cannot be changeable. The question that remains, however, is that if the religious beliefs in their totality and the main principles of the

---

<sup>548</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 153-4.

<sup>549</sup> *The Qur'an*. 34:28.

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid.* 2:185.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.* 3:96.

<sup>552</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 14. 90-1.

<sup>553</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 152.

<sup>554</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:19.

<sup>555</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 17. 123.

religious practices of Islam are the same as those of Judaism and Christianity, what would happen to these two religions after the emergence of Prophet Muhammad. Are they still valid? Now, we will investigate the way in which Javadi tries to discuss these questions.

#### **4.2.4.4 Islam and the Validity of Other Revealed Religions**

Javadi, referring to ‘Abdulkarim Soroush’s opinions, states that some Muslim thinkers believe in the diversity of the straight paths to salvation. The basis of this notion is that all religions contain enough truth to lead their followers towards felicity and salvation. The truth, accordingly, is not the exclusive territory of a particular tradition, but can be found in all religions. Salvation, therefore, is not limited to a specific tradition; rather, all religions can lead their adherents to salvation. Therefore, no religion could be preferred over others.<sup>556</sup> For Soroush, the diversity of the Prophets is an indication of the diversity of religions. He says that, by sending numerous Prophets, “God planted the seed of pluralism himself”. He argues that God manifested Himself to each prophet in a different way, sent each of them to a certain region, inspired certain interpretations upon each of them, and in this way “the furnace of pluralism was heated up”.<sup>557</sup> For him, therefore, Islam is not the only true and valid religion.

In contrast, Javadi does not accept the horizontal and equal validity of all revealed religions. He claims that the teachings of Prophet Muhammad represent the only true and valid religion. He argues that each *shari‘ah* was only perfect and valid in its own time, but, with the appearance of the new *shari‘ah*, the previous *shari‘ah* would lose its validity.<sup>558</sup> He believes that the invalidity of previous *shari‘ahs* can be proven through both rational and traditional justifications. First we address Javadi’s rational justification.

---

<sup>556</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7 vols., vol. 7 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2009). 263-4.

<sup>557</sup> Soroush, *Siratha-yi Mustaqim*. 18.

<sup>558</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 737-8.

#### 4.2.4.4.1 Rational Justification

From the rational point of view, Javadi provides the following arguments.

##### 4.2.4.4.1.1 Comprehensiveness of Islam

Javadi attempts to prove the invalidity of the previous *shari'ahs* rationally by demonstrating the comprehensiveness of Islam. It seems that Javadi, due to his philosophical background, is inspired by Sadr al-Din, who made a great contribution to this attitude.<sup>559</sup> Javadi, however, tries to consider this subject from four angles.

First, the Qur'an considers itself as a confirmer of the previous Books.<sup>560</sup> For Javadi, this implies the comprehensiveness of Islam. He argues that in the time of Prophet Muhammad, the Old and the New Testaments were not obsolete Books; rather, they were available and formal Books read and practiced by the Jews and Christians.<sup>561</sup> The Qur'an was not talking about imaginary or hypothetical entities when it was confirming them. The confirmation of the Qur'an, Javadi states, does not mean that it confirms the entire contents of the previous Books since some parts of them had been declared by the Qur'an to be distorted.<sup>562</sup> He maintains that the Qur'an's confirmation has two meanings: a) the truth of the previous Books should be in conformity with the last Prophet's teachings<sup>563</sup> and b) the Qur'an sustained the religious beliefs and central principles of religious practices of the previous Books and completed them.<sup>564</sup> To confirm them does not mean to be identical with them. If the Qur'an had just confirmed the previous Books without adding anything to them, it would have been identical with them. Hence, the Qur'an's confirmation implies that it is more comprehensive than them.

Javadi, in order to prove the comprehensiveness of Islam, tries to resort to some narrations as well. He argues that God bestowed the torches of guidance on his messengers. These lights have not been subject to disappearance in the course of the centuries; rather, with the improvement in humans' intelligence and capacity for knowledge, the tools

---

<sup>559</sup> Sadr al-Din, *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, 1. 78, 219, 567-8; *ibid.*, 2. 458, 500; Sadr al-Din, *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*. 373; Sadr al-Din, *Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 4.

<sup>560</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:48.

<sup>561</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 64-5.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.* 65.

<sup>563</sup> Javadi, *Islam va Muhit-i Zist*. 309-310.

<sup>564</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 65-7; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 286.

of divine guidance were developed until the most perfect torch of guidance was bestowed upon Prophet Muhammad.<sup>565</sup> Javadi refers to the hadith that each prophet, at the moment of his death, transmitted his knowledge to the next one, so much so that the knowledge of all Prophets has been transmitted to Muhammad and his successors.<sup>566</sup> In a hadith, Imam al-Sadiq states that God bestowed upon Muhammad and his successors what had been granted to all Prophets. We are thus made aware of the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.<sup>567</sup>

According to the verse “Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have approved Islam as your religion,”<sup>568</sup> Javadi holds that the Qur’an considers Muhammad’s *shari‘ah* as the development of previous *shari‘ahs* and states that it has been revealed for the most developed human mind in such a way that there will be no need for a new *shari‘ah* anymore.<sup>569</sup> Javadi refers to many narrations which imply the perfect nature of Islam.<sup>570</sup> He concludes that while we have access to the perfect *shari‘ah*, wisdom testifies to the invalidity of the imperfect ones.<sup>571</sup>

Second, another sign for the all-inclusive nature of Islam is that the Qur’an considers itself “as a guardian over” the previous Books.<sup>572</sup> Javadi claims that the term “guardian” (*muhaymin*) is an exclusive title for the Qur’an and there is not a similar description for the previous Books. *Muhaymin*, as Javadi states, means witness (*shahid*) and observer (*nazir*). The guardianship of the Qur’an means that its sublime

<sup>565</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 6. 364-9; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 456-7.

<sup>566</sup> Muhammad Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 8 vols., vol. 8 (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986). 114-7.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 1. 225. See also; Al-Saduq, *al-Tawhid*. 275; Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1. 277; Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Mir‘at al-‘Uqul fi Akhbar al-Rasul*, 26 vols., vol. 3 (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1983). 24.

<sup>568</sup> *The Qur’an*. 5:3.

<sup>569</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-5.

<sup>570</sup> ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i-yi Qur’an-i Karim: Jami‘ih dar Qur’an*, 19 vols., vol. 17 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2010). 106-9; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 487-8. For the hadiths see; ‘Abd al-Ali Al-‘Arusi, *Tafsir al-Nur al-Thaqalayn*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Isma‘iliyyah, 1994). 74-6; Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 2. 74; Ali Al-Muttqi, *Kanz al-‘Ummal*, 16 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Risalat, 1985). 24; Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1. 59-60, 199 and 269.

<sup>571</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 220.

<sup>572</sup> *The Qur’an*. 5:48.

contents are a yardstick for evaluating the contents of the previous Books. The Qur'an, therefore, has superiority, preference and authority over other Books.<sup>573</sup>

Third, Prophet Jesus, as the Qur'an states, gave good tidings of the advent of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>574</sup> Javadi states that the term "good tidings" (*bisharah*) is used when there is an expectation of important and "novel news". If the Qur'an, in comparison to the previous Books, did not comprise new information, the term "good tidings" in the verse would not make sense.<sup>575</sup> Javadi asserts that the above verse proves that Prophet Muhammad presented new, sublime and perfect teachings. In other words, duplicating the contents and teachings of the previous Books cannot be considered as "good tidings".<sup>576</sup> Hence, the term "good tidings" proves the perfection and comprehensiveness of Islam<sup>577</sup>, and, consequently, the validity of imperfect religions is against the wisdom.<sup>578</sup>

Fourth, the finality of the Prophet, as Javadi states, is another reason for the all-inclusiveness of Islam. From the Islamic point of view, the Prophet sealed the chain of prophecy and his *shari'ah* is final. For Javadi it is rationally inconceivable that the *shari'ah* of the last Prophet does not satisfy the needs of humans till the Day of Judgment. Javadi, in order to prove his view, refers to the hadith that "God has ended the chain of prophecy with Muhammad, so there is no prophet any more. He put an end to the divine Books with the Qur'an, so there will be no scripture after it. God has explicated everything".<sup>579</sup> Another hadith states that "God has provided everything in the Qur'an and nothing has been left out".<sup>580</sup> Javadi, having mentioned these hadiths, concludes that Islamic laws have been legislated in such a way that they can enable man to attain perfection.<sup>581</sup> For Javadi, human reason decrees that the most perfect *shari'ah* should be considered as the only acceptable religion.

---

<sup>573</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22.581-2; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 4 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009).77-8.

<sup>574</sup> *The Qur'an*. 61:6.

<sup>575</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 4. 78.

<sup>576</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 585.

<sup>577</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 207.

<sup>578</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 220.

<sup>579</sup> Al-'Arusi, *Tafsir al-Nur*, 3. 76; Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1. 269.

<sup>580</sup> Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1. 59; Al-'Arusi, *Tafsir al-Nur*, 3. 74.

<sup>581</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 17. 107-9, 433; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Vilayat-i Faqih* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010).215-6.



Javadi regards the above as rational approach for proving the comprehensiveness of Islam. However, his rational arguments are all faith-based and draw mainly on the verses of the Qur'an and Prophetic narrations. It would have been more fitting to call them theological rather than rational arguments. From his theological perspective, since the Prophet's teachings consist of lofty, sacred knowledge and whatever man needs in his natural and spiritual life, it is so perfect that there is no need for a new *shari'ah* anymore.<sup>582</sup> For Javadi, finality implies the perfection of Islam in such a way that nothing more perfect than it can be conceived.

In sum, Javadi attempts to prove rationally the invalidity of the previous *shari'ahs* by demonstrating the comprehensiveness of Islam. He tries to approach this subject from four angles. He establishes his argument on two premises: 1) Islam is the most perfect and comprehensive *shari'ah* 2) and divine wisdom inclines towards the perfect one. He, from these two premises, concludes that the comprehensiveness of Islam implies the invalidity of the previous *shari'ahs*.<sup>583</sup> Although Javadi's second premise is rational, his first premise is purely faith-based and draws only on the verses of the Qur'an and narrations. In other words, the comprehensiveness of Islam cannot be independently proved in such a way that it could be acceptable for the followers of other religions. The scholars of other faiths may as well claim the comprehensiveness of their religion via their own sources.

#### 4.2.4.4.1.2 Universality of Islam

The invalidity of the previous *shari'ahs* can be proven by the universal mission of the divine Major Prophets. As Javadi claims, the five Major Prophets' missions were universal, addressing all nations. This means that whoever heard the call of a Major Prophet was obliged to accept it. Javadi, for instance, refers to the universality of Prophet Jesus's mission. He says that although the Qur'an refers to Jesus as "an apostle to the Children of Israel",<sup>584</sup> his mission was universal. It is clear that each prophet starts his mission with his own community, just as Moses and Muhammad

---

<sup>582</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 286-7.

<sup>583</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 220.

<sup>584</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:49.

did, but they gradually expanded their task and addressed the whole mankind. Therefore, the term “the Children of Israel” never confined the mission of Jesus to those particular people.<sup>585</sup>

Presuming the universality of Major Prophets’ missions, it follows that the contemporaneous universality of two such prophets would be contradictory. Putting it differently, if Moses was a universal Prophet, God could not have sent Jesus as a universal Prophet as well. In other words, the universality of Jesus should put an end to Moses’s universal mission. Since Prophet Muhammad’s mission was universal as well, his prophethood should put an end to the prophetic mission of Jesus and both of them cannot be valid at the same time.

Having discussed Javadi’s perspectives on the invalidity of previous *shari’ahs* through a rational justification, this section aims to see how he tries to prove their invalidity via traditional justifications.

#### 4.2.4.4.2 The Traditional Justifications

As mentioned earlier, regarding the verses “Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam”<sup>586</sup> and “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter,”<sup>587</sup> Muslim scholars give two different and contradictory, that is, exclusivist and pluralist, interpretations.<sup>588</sup> Javadi considers this issue by focusing on the difference between the meaning of Islam in the Qur’an and in traditions. He claims that the term *islam*, in the Qur’an, does not designate only the institutionalized teachings introduced by Prophet Muhammad, but rather, it is the name for the teachings of all divine Prophets, who were named in a number of verses as *muslims*. The term “*muslims*” is employed in

---

<sup>585</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 320-2. Ibid., 21. 373.

<sup>586</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:19.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid. 3:85.

<sup>588</sup> Al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil*, 2. 9; Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur’an*, 1. 423; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’an al-‘Azim*, 2. 60; Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 340; Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Law and Grace in Islam: Sufi Attitudes Towards the Shari’ah," in *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss, and John W. Welch (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990). 45-6.

the Qur'an for Abraham<sup>589</sup>, his children<sup>590</sup>, the people of Moses<sup>591</sup>, the sons of Jacob,<sup>592</sup> and the disciples of Jesus.<sup>593</sup> Moreover, the Prophets after Moses who judged according to the Torah were considered to be *muslims*.<sup>594</sup> Javadi adds that, according to the Qur'an, Prophet Abraham referred to the followers of revealed religions as "*muslims*".<sup>595</sup> Based on what has been argued above, Javadi concludes that the term "*islam*" in the Qur'an is not exclusively employed to express the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>596</sup>

However, Javadi holds that, although the term "*islam*" in the above verses denotes a general meaning, there are other instances in which it refers to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad only.

1- There is evidence in the Qur'an and in narrations that everybody is obliged to follow the *shari'ah* of the prophet of their time.<sup>597</sup> According to the Qur'anic perspective, the good deed is one of the conditions of salvation.<sup>598</sup> Carrying out a righteous deed, on the other hand, is a practice that should be done according to the present *shari'ah* and not according to the previous one.<sup>599</sup> If, at present, someone wants to practise according to the *shari'ah* of Jesus, for instance, their practice cannot be considered as a good deed, according to the Qur'anic perspective.<sup>600</sup> Having changed the direction of *Qiblah* from al-Aqsa Mosque (Bayt al-Maqdis) to the Holy Mosque (Masjid al-Haram), the Qur'an does not consider the recitation of prayer facing al-Aqsa Mosque as a good deed any more.<sup>601</sup> Therefore, each *shari'ah* was right in its own time when righteous deeds were required to lead the people of

---

<sup>589</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:67.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid. 2:128.

<sup>591</sup> Ibid. 10:84

<sup>592</sup> Ibid. 2:133.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid. 3: 52 and 5:111.

<sup>594</sup> Ibid. 5: 44.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid. 22:78.

<sup>596</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 157; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 730-1.

<sup>597</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 733.

<sup>598</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:62.

<sup>599</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2. 61, 472, 524; *ibid.*, 5. 40; *ibid.*, 20. 524; *ibid.*, 14. 404.

<sup>600</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 20. 524.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid., 14. 738

that period to salvation, but the time of validity expired with the introduction of the new *shari'ah*.<sup>602</sup>

2- Javadi maintains that the validity of previous *shari'ahs* contradicts the apparent meaning of the verses that indicate the universality of the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's Mission. God describes the Qur'an as a universal Book for all nations. He says, "the Qur'an was sent down as guidance to mankind",<sup>603</sup> "This [Qur'an] is an explanation for mankind",<sup>604</sup> and "This is a proclamation for mankind".<sup>605</sup> On the other hand, Qur'anic verses indicate that Prophet Muhammad's prophethood was of a universal nature, dealing with all nations and all places and times: "We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and warner to all mankind",<sup>606</sup> "We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations",<sup>607</sup>; and "Say 'O, mankind! I am the Apostle of Allah to you all'".<sup>608</sup> These verses, as Javadi says, call upon all nations to accept the last *shari'ah*.<sup>609</sup>

In the eyes of Javadi, if the Qur'an is an "explanation" and a "proclamation" for all nations and Prophet Muhammad was for all mankind, it means that all people, whether they are the followers of previous *shari'ah* or not, are obliged to accept his teachings.

Moreover, Javadi claims that some Qur'anic verses are specifically directed to Jews and Christians, calling on them to embrace the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The Qur'an says,

O People of the Book! Certainly Our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you used to hide of the Book, and excusing many [an offense of yours]. Certainly there has come to you a light from Allah, and a manifest Book. With it Allah guides those who follow [the course of] His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path.<sup>610</sup>

---

<sup>602</sup> Ibid. 737.

<sup>603</sup> *The Qur'an*.2:185.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid. 3:138.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid. 14:52. See also; 14:1; 6:18; 4:174; 25:1; 81:27; 12:104; 38:87 and 6:90.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid. 34:28.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid. 21:107

<sup>608</sup> Ibid. 7:158.

<sup>609</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 266-7.

<sup>610</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:15-6.

According to these verses, the only straight path which can bring the People of the Book from the “darkness into the light” is that of Qur’anic teachings.<sup>611</sup> Referring to the verse “if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided; and if they turn away, then they are only [steeped] in defiance. Allah shall suffice you against them”,<sup>612</sup> Javadi maintains that the acceptance of Muhammad’s *shari‘ah* is the only path to salvation.<sup>613</sup>

Furthermore, Javadi, resorting to the verse “believe in that which I have sent down confirming that which is with you, and do not be the first ones to defy it”,<sup>614</sup> holds that the Qur’an disallows the People of the Book from denying Muhammad’s teachings and considers such deniers as disbelievers (*kafir*).<sup>615</sup>

To Javadi, these verses, taken together, reject the validity of previous *shari‘ahs*. He holds that each *shari‘ah* in its own time was perfect, but the new *shari‘ah* invalidated them. In short, the validity of two *shari‘ahs* at the same time is not reasonable.

Although, the aim of this chapter was merely to present Javadi’s views on the diversity and validity of religions without judging them, it cannot go unnoticed that his arguments are based on evidence derived from Muslim traditions only, which is not necessarily valid for the followers of other faiths.

In *Din Shinasi*, Javadi summarizes his views on different types of diversity in some more detail. He argues that the diversity of faiths can be contemplated in five ways, two of which he admits to be theoretically acceptable. The first possible situation is when diverse religions have the same goal and the same path. It is like people walking on the different lanes of the same highway or joining the highway at different junctions. He regards this type of diversity acceptable since they all arrive at the same destination. In other words, all the diverse religions in this case can be true.

---

<sup>611</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 267-8.

<sup>612</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:137.

<sup>613</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 269-70

<sup>614</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:41.

<sup>615</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 4. 73-4.

The second possibility is when the path is one, but the goals are different in a mutually inclusive way. In such conditions, the religions are all different manifestations of the same higher goal. This kind of diversity is also acceptable since all religions are considered to be walking on the same path, and their differences are marginal. Javadi does not elaborate on what he means by this, but I assume he has intra-religious diversity in mind here.

The third possibility is when diverse religions have mutually exclusive goals. For example, one believes in the life after death while the other does not. Naturally, in this type of diversity, both sides cannot be true at the same time, and one of them must be false; otherwise, it would lead to contradiction. The fourth type of diversity appears when the goal is one, but diversity is caused by diagonally different paths. Certainly, all these paths cannot lead to the truth since they go in opposite directions. Hence, only the path that leads to the truth can be regarded as true religions.

The fifth type is caused by the diversity of cultures and customs. This type of diversity is a fact that should not be confused with the diversity of religions. Javadi warns that cultural pluralism should not be confused with religious pluralism. The former is a fact while the latter is a claim. Cultures are neither true nor false; they are just ways of living while religions could be true or false.<sup>616</sup>

### **4.3 Second part: Pluralism and Peaceful Coexistence**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

In the course of centuries, followers of different religions were victims of severe persecution. Emperor Nero cruelly executed many Christians in 64 AD. They were “condemned simply for being Christians”. The next persecution occurred “under the Emperor Domitian (81-96)”.<sup>617</sup> In the year 303, meetings of Christians were banned by Diocletian. Their churches were destroyed, and their Scriptures were burnt.

---

<sup>616</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 192-4.

<sup>617</sup> Hans Küng, *The Catholic Church*, trans. John Bowden (London: Phoenix Press, 2001). 33.

Christians who insisted on “their testimony to Christ” were imprisoned.<sup>618</sup> Similarly, the Jewish community “under Christendom was much more insecure”. The Jews constantly suffered from “degradation and persecution”.<sup>619</sup> In the past, religions, according to Watt, used to consider the followers of other religions as enemies. History chronicles the bitter arguments and conflicts between Jews and Christians.<sup>620</sup> However, in spite of some religious extremists, religions “are no longer rivals or enemies”.<sup>621</sup> According to Watt, today religions interact with each other in “greater extent than ever before” and are increasingly exposed to the “secularist Western intellectual” viewpoint.<sup>622</sup>

This part aims to first address the significance of unity and peace between Muslims and non-Muslims from Javadi’s point of view. It will then look at the Qur’anic grounds that he establishes for peaceful coexistence.

#### **4.3.2 The Unity and Peace between Muslims and Non-Muslims**

There is no doubt that peace and order play a great role in the development of societies. Javadi contends that man is naturally in need of unity and coexistence with others. He believes that the principles of peace and coexistence are rooted in the Qur’an and hadiths.<sup>623</sup> However, in order to achieve proper unity, we have to cling to the revealed commands.<sup>624</sup>

Islam considers itself a universal religion. It addresses all humankind in all places and times.<sup>625</sup> According to Javadi, the Qur’an partially confirms the teachings of the previous revealed traditions.<sup>626</sup> Therefore, maintaining peaceful relations with them should not be difficult. The Qur’an considers Prophet Muhammad “as a mercy to all

---

<sup>618</sup> Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*. 86-93.

<sup>619</sup> Alan Unterman, *The Jews: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990). 225.

<sup>620</sup> Watt, *Religious Truth*. 89 and 96.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid. 91.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid. 88-96.

<sup>623</sup> Javadi, *Islam va Muhiit-i Zist*. 300-2.

<sup>624</sup> Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 57.

<sup>625</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 266-7.

<sup>626</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:3.

nations”<sup>627</sup> and global peace is undoubtedly an instance of divine mercy. Therefore, Islam has the capacity to lead the pursuit of global peace. For Javadi, the principles of peace have already been established in the nature of Islamic teachings.<sup>628</sup>

### **4.3.3 The Qur’anic Grounds for Peaceful Coexistence**

In the Qur’an, all believers in divine prophets are considered as “one community”.<sup>629</sup> Moreover, the People of the Book have been called towards unity.<sup>630</sup> The Qur’an, in order to build a peaceful relationship, attempts to highlight its elements of unity with the People of the Book. In other words, such unity will be feasible when we realize and accept the central principles of unity described in the Qur’an. This section aims to describe some of those principles from Javadi’s perspective.

#### **4.3.3.1 The Universal Dignity of Man**

One of the foundations of peaceful relations with others is an acknowledgment of the universal dignity of man. According to the verse “Indeed We honoured the Children of Adam”,<sup>631</sup> God has bestowed special dignity upon human beings in general. Therefore, due to this specific honour, human beings are superior to all other creations. In the light of what has been mentioned, Javadi concludes that Muslims, owing to the special nobility of man, should respect and coexist peacefully with others regardless of what they believe in.<sup>632</sup> In other words, in the eyes of Islam, the criteria for good relations are not piety and salvation.

#### **4.3.3.2 Keen to Find the Truth**

Although the faithless and polytheist are certainly in the wrong, nonetheless, they are inclined towards the truth. In other words, for Javadi, they are keen inherently to find

---

<sup>627</sup> Ibid. 21:107.

<sup>628</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 177-8.

<sup>629</sup> Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 108. See also; *The Qur’an*. 21:92 and 23:52.

<sup>630</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 521-2.

<sup>631</sup> *The Qur’an*. 17:70.

<sup>632</sup> Muhammad Rida Mustafapur, "Qur'an va Zindiqi-yi Musalimat Amiz-i Piyruvan-i Adyan," *Akhlaq-i Vahyani* 2012. 149.



the truth although they remain unable to reach it. He adds that, since they are enthusiastically looking for the truth, Muslims should coexist with them peacefully.<sup>633</sup> Moreover, according to the verse, “Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you deal with them with kindness and justice. Indeed, Allah loves the just”,<sup>634</sup> Javadi states that Muslims should coexist peacefully with non-Muslims as long as they do not intrigue against Muslims.<sup>635</sup> Therefore, the falsity of their religions should not provide any excuse for Muslims to mistreat them.

#### 4.3.3.3 Respecting the Sacred Rites and Symbols

Religions have different perceptions about the natural and the supernatural. Something, like a cow, can be sacred in some traditions while it is not in others. Even within one tradition, as Rodrigues says, one person’s firm religious conviction may be considered as the peak of delusion by another.<sup>636</sup> Amin al-Islam Al-Tabarsi (1075-1153) records that, in the time of Prophet Muhammad, the idols of pagans were abused by some Muslims. In reaction to this behaviour, God sent this verse<sup>637</sup> “Do not abuse those whom they invoke besides Allah, lest they should abuse Allah out of hostility, without any knowledge”.<sup>638</sup> Javadi, in the light of this verse, maintains that God commands Muslims to respect the sacred beliefs and symbols of other traditions, including those of idol-worshippers. All religious believers naturally are sensitive to their own sacred beliefs, practices and symbols. He adds that all believers, in order to pave the way for good relation, should respect the sacred beliefs of each other.<sup>639</sup> It is obvious that many religious wars stem from insults to what others hold sacred. Javadi concludes that Muslims, in order to coexist peacefully with non-Muslims, should respect the beliefs of others.

---

<sup>633</sup> Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 133-4

<sup>634</sup> *The Qur'an*. 60:8.

<sup>635</sup> Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 134; ‘Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 23 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra‘, 2011). 47.

<sup>636</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 2.

<sup>637</sup> Amin al-Islam Al-Tabarsi, *Majma‘ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 10 vols., vol. 4 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Nasir Khusru, 1993). 536-8.

<sup>638</sup> *The Qur'an*. 6:108.

<sup>639</sup> Mustafapur, "Qur'an va Zindiqi-yi Musalimat Amiz-i Piyruvan-i Adyan". 151.

#### 4.3.3.4 The Divine Books

As Javadi explains, the Qur'an says<sup>640</sup> that, at the beginning of the world, man had a very simple life. Due to God-given instinct and intellect, people did not have any disagreements about the main principles of ontology, epistemology and their conception of the world. Potential obstacles and questions were solved by the Prophets' divine guidance. Therefore, they did not need any codified divine book. However, with the increasing population, different ideas and beliefs emerged and, as a result, theological and social disputes highlighted the need for a codified book in order to show the truth.<sup>641</sup>

Thus, the divine Books should be sources of authority for the People of the Book in resolving religious problems and differences. As the Qur'an says, they can offer good criteria for evaluating different schools of thought. In other words, believers, in order to find the truth, should refer to their divine Books. Therefore, the revealed Book itself is one of the significant pivots that can pave the path for the unity of all People of the Book.<sup>642</sup>

#### 4.3.4 Conclusion

As it is evident from the above, Javadi's arguments are remarkably faith-based. He tries to prove his points in a universal manner but by drawing on Muslim sources only, especially the Qur'an. He seldom refers to any non-Islamic sources but passes sweeping judgments about all faiths. Nevertheless, his arguments are great encouragement for Muslim to seek peaceful coexistence with other faiths.

Javadi contends that religion is a collection of revealed beliefs and rules that lead human beings towards salvation. Javadi, in the first place, divides religions into two categories, revealed and non-revealed. Revealed religions are those that are based on divine revelation and non-revealed ones are those that do not originate from divine guidance.

---

<sup>640</sup> The Qur'an says: "Mankind was a single community; then Allah sent the Prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed". *The Qur'an*. 2: 213.

<sup>641</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 384.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid. 400-2.

Javadi, following Avicenna, holds that man is a social being and sociality requires proper and perfect laws and rules. Man, furthermore, due to his fallibility, cannot be a proper legislator. Taking these points into consideration, he concludes that, since man-made religions cannot be reliable, God is obliged to convey His infallible religion via His Prophets. Therefore, since revealed religions are infallible, they can be valid. In other words, infallibility is the only criterion for validity.

God has sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets for the guidance of men. They can be divided into two groups, Major Prophets and Minor Prophets. Major Prophets are those to whom God gave a divine Book, namely: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Minor Prophets, on the other hand, are those who were to preach according to the previous Book.

According to Javadi, the teachings of these revealed Books can be divided into two types: religious beliefs and religious rulings. He claims that the principles and foundations of these divine Books are equal and the same. Prophet Muhammad does not add a single principle or viewpoint to the religious beliefs of previous Books, but rather attempts to clarify what was conveyed to the previous Major Prophets. Javadi, referring to the Qur'an and hadiths, argues that prophethood consists of a coherent chain of messengers who all convey essentially the same message. He concludes that the unity of religious beliefs of the Major Prophets figured in Islamic teachings is reasonably necessary, and, consequently, the plurality of beliefs is inconceivable.

In the realm of religious rulings (*shari'ah*), he argues that the central principles of these Books are the same. Referring to Islamic traditions, he claims that these principles cannot be subject to change or abrogation. Javadi states that the practical teachings of the Major Prophets conform to man's *fitrah*. On the other hand, the *fitrah*, in the course of human history, is unchangeable. He, thus, concludes that the main principles of *shari'ahs* cannot be changed. He agrees that the conditions and the form of each *shari'ah*, due to the situation of societies, can be different. However, these minor dissimilarities between the divine *shari'ahs* never imply the plurality of religions.

He argues that each *shari'ah* was perfect and helpful in its own time, but, with the appearance of the new one, the previous *shari'ah* would not be perfect and beneficial any more. Each *shari'ah*, in other words, invalidates the previous one. He attempts to prove this both rationally and by resorting to hadiths. To Javadi, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad represent the only true and valid religion in our time.

Javadi also tries to concern himself with the issue of peaceful coexistence. He claims that the Qur'an emphasises the peaceful relation of Muslims with others. He holds that, since the groundwork of peace has been mentioned in the Qur'an, Islam has a capacity to lead the people towards global peace. He adds that, although the faith of infidels is false, they are inherently eager to find the truth. In other words, Muslims should coexist peacefully with whoever looks enthusiastically for the truth. The falsity of a religion, therefore, should not prevent Muslims from establishing and maintaining good relations with its followers. Javadi, moreover, holds that Muslims, due to the special dignity of human beings, should respect others regardless of what they believe in.

## 5 Chapter Five: Professor Ayoub and Religions

When discussing religions, their diversity, and possibility of dialogue between them, Professor Ayoub is an ideal figure to investigate. He has personally experienced two faiths, has been educated in both, and has born in and migrated to multi-religious and multi-cultural societies. Hence, as a Muslim scholar, his views on the subject are invaluable<sup>643</sup>, and comparing his views with Javadi is singularly interesting as the two scholars come from two distinctly different backgrounds. However, before giving a comparative analysis of their views, in this chapter I will focus on Ayoub's views on dialogue and diversity of religions. I will be more descriptive here than critical and will leave the critical treatment of Ayoub's views for the next chapter where I will compare his views with those of Javadi's

The chapter consists of two parts. In the first part I will try to explain Ayoub's opinion about the possibility of dialogue, its foregrounds, and its prerequisites. In the second part I will present his views regarding the diversity of religions, its causes and its benefits. I will also try to outline the plurality of religions and definition of valid religion from Ayoub's point of view.

### 5.1 Dialogue

For Ayoub dialogue between religions is the natural state of affairs. He dates back the history of Muslim-Christian dialogue to the very first days of Islamic revelation. The first dialogue, Ayoub would have us believe, occurred between Prophet Muhammad and the Christian sage, Waraqah Ibn Nawfal, who was a cousin of the Prophet's wife, Khadijah.<sup>644</sup> He points out that when the first verses of the Qur'an

---

<sup>643</sup> Ayoub's experience has led to studies and authorship of significant juridical and theological issues between Islam and Christianity. He also discusses Christological issues from the Islamic perspective. He presents some reflections on "Christology which remains one of the richest and most difficult areas in Muslim-Christian dialogue". Ayoub, "Introduction." 4.

<sup>644</sup> The first encounter of Prophet Muhammad with Gabriel was in the Cave of Hira when he, for the first time, received some verses of the Qur'an. Some narrators describe this event in detail. They state that Muhammad was frightened when he heard the voice of Gabriel calling him. He came back fearfully to the house of Khadijah. When she saw him, she was fearful, too. She said, "You are the man of God; He will not leave you alone". Khadijah, in order to remove any concern, took

were revealed to the Prophet, he entered into dialogue with Waraqah in search of “confirmation of the authenticity of his” mission.<sup>645</sup> Although this incident can hardly be considered as an instance of dialogue, it is interesting to see Ayoub taking it up despite his denominational affiliations. It is well known that this is a Sunni narrative about the beginning of revelation which is vehemently rejected by Shi‘ah scholars.<sup>646</sup> Nevertheless, regardless of its provenance, Ayoub takes it up as a support for his historical outlook towards religious dialogue in Islam.

The other dialogue, as Ayoub claims, occurred between the Prophet, as a young man, with the monk Bahirah in Syria. He recognized Muhammad as “the prophet of the end of time”. Ayoub states that Prophet Muhammad probably “may have often met” the Syrian monk before his prophecy. He adds that such meetings, if they truly happened,<sup>647</sup> “could only have left a general positive personal impression on him”.<sup>648</sup>

---

Muhammad to the house of Waraqah. Waraqah, first put some questions to Muhammad and then said that there was no need for concern. “It was Gabriel who had come to Moses. He gave you good news about your prophetic mission”. Waraqah’s statement reassured and calmed Muhammad, who said, “Now I realize that I am a Prophet”. For references see, Abu al-Husein Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 8 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d). 97-9; Muhammad Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 8 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr 1981). 3-4; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, 1.191

<sup>645</sup> Ayoub, “Introduction.” 1; Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, “The Islamic Tradition,” in *World Religions: Western Traditions*, ed. Willard G. Oxtoby (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2002). 344-5.

<sup>646</sup> For a detail discussion and refutation see; Muhammad Hadi Ma‘rifat, *‘Ulum-i Qur‘ani* (Qum: Mu‘assasa-yi Farhang-i Tamhid, 2001). 31-6; Ja‘far Sobhani, *Mafahim al-Qur‘an*, 14 vols., vol. 7 (Qum: Mu‘assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2004). 108-116. See also; Ja‘far Murtada, *al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabiyy al-A‘zam*, 35 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Dar al-Hadith li al-Tiba‘ah wa al-Nashr, 2006). 5-40.

<sup>647</sup> The journey of Prophet Muhammad with his uncle, Abu Talib, to Syria has been reported by some Shi‘ah and Sunni historians. These reports are slightly different. For the Shi‘ah sources, see, Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 111 vols., vol. 15 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya‘ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1982). 103-204; Muhammad Al-Saduq, *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni‘mah*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu‘assasah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1984). 182-8. For Sunni sources please see, Muhammad Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari*, 11 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Turath, 1967). 277-8; Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah*, 1. 180-3; Muhammad Ibn al-Ishaq, *al-Siyar wa al-Maghazi*, 5 vols., vol. 2 (Rabat: Ma‘had al-Dirasat wa al-Abhath li al-ta‘rib, n.d). 53-5; Muhammad Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 8 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1990). 96-7. In this journey, Bahirah, saw Prophet Muhammad when he was between nine and twelve years old. There are some pieces of evidence that can confirm the weakness of these reports. Some reports, for instance, say that after the meeting, Muhammad did not go to Syria and that Abu Bakr and Bilal brought him back to Mecca. Ja‘far Murtida argues that Abu Bakr was around six years old at that time and Bilal was probably two years old or not even born yet; how then can we believe that they were responsible for bringing him back to Mecca? Ja‘far Murtada, *al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabiyy al-A‘zam*, 35 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Dar al-Hadith li al-Tiba‘ah wa al-Nashr, 2006). 180. Moreover, Husein Diyarbakri (d. 1558), a famous historian, questions the authenticity of these narrations. He states that Abu Bakr and Bilal had no part at all in the journey. Husein Al-Diyarbakri, *Tarikh al-Khamis fi Ahwal Anfus al-Nafis*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Mu‘assasah Sha‘ban, n.d). 259. Likewise, some renowned scholars such as Muhammad Tirmidhi (824-892), Isma‘il Ibn Kathir (1300-73) and Muhammad Dhahabi (1274-1348), due to the weakness of the hadiths, are in two minds about the authenticity of these reports.

The above two examples cited by Ayoub underline the difficulty of defining dialogue in his view. Therefore, I shall begin this section by exploring the way in which Ayoub defines dialogue. The second part of the section is devoted to elaborating on the need for the believers of different faiths to engage in dialogue. Thirdly, to pave the way for fruitful dialogue, it deals with the common grounds in religions. Fourth, it addresses the aims and goals of dialogue. Finally, it focuses on the presuppositions of dialogue.

### 5.1.1 Ayoub and the Definition of Dialogue

The definition of dialogue seems so self-evident that one may think there is no need to define it. Nevertheless, a variety of definitions have been suggested for it. This diversity, Ataullah Siddiqui argues, stems from the “eras from where they come and the nature of the encounter they are facing”. Considering five definitions, he refers to the most comprehensive of all and decides that dialogue is a “process wherein people with diverse faith backgrounds come together and recognising each other’s confessional identity and integrity, join hands in equality and respect to resolve a common and mutually perceived threat to all”.<sup>649</sup> Therefore, dialogue is a form of communication in which two or more people attempt to reach mutual perception or to find a solution for a common threat.

Leonard Swidler refers to a similar definition and holds that dialogue is a “conversation between two or more persons with different views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that both can change and grow”. Thus, they enter into dialogue not to make their partner change, but to “learn, change and grow” themselves.<sup>650</sup>

---

Murtada, *al-Sahih min Sirat*, 2. 176-8; Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-Islami*, 57 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, 1987). 57.

<sup>648</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 1. See also; Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 232.

<sup>649</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 56-7.

<sup>650</sup> Leonard Swidler, "Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today," in *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Marknoll: Orbis Books, 1987). 6. See also; Leonard Swidler, "A Dialogue on Dialogue," in *Death or Dialogue? From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue* (London: SMC Press, 1990). 56-7.

For Ayoub, however, dialogue is a search to discover “how the others describe themselves”.<sup>651</sup> It helps to understand the beliefs of other religions via their Books and through their theologians. Christianity, for instance, should be presented via the New Testament and the interpretations of Christian theologians not from the polemical literature of other religions. Ayoub strongly opposes those who think there is no need for dialogue since they usually consider their own religion to be the best and the most perfect faith. He, therefore, goes in length to show the necessity and productivity of dialogue between faiths. A summary of his arguments in this regard is presented below.

### **5.1.2 Ayoub and the Necessity of Dialogue**

Ayoub holds that Islam and Christianity in the past occupied two distinct worlds. In his view, “Dar al-Islam and the Christian Militant have not only been two distinct geographical domains competing for domination and world hegemony, they have also been interiorized by millions of men and women across the centuries”. The lives of people and the history of world, consequently, had been shaped by them.<sup>652</sup> However, nowadays, due to the development of technology and explosion of information, religions have taken on a global status and the followers of religions can easily convey encouraging and beatific messages to the whole world. At the same time, extreme ideas and the exclusivist beliefs of some may cause divergence and even religious war in the global village. This concern necessitates that the theologians should attempt to resolve all religious disputes through peaceful dialogue.

Ayoub states that today, whether we want it or not, we breathe in a pluralistic world. He holds, according to the verse, “O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another,”<sup>653</sup> the whole human race is one but “we are also different peoples, cultures and religious communities ... we are not and cannot be an undifferentiated

---

<sup>651</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 99.

<sup>652</sup> Ayoub, “Roots of Muslim-Christian.” 58.

<sup>653</sup> *The Qur'an*. 49:13.



mass of humankind”.<sup>654</sup> If this is so, the theologians in our society cannot confine themselves to their own teachings and be incurious about the others’ thoughts. This conclusion leads believers to dialogue with others.

To further strengthen his arguments on the necessity of dialogue, Ayoub states that God, in order to limit the chance of any excuse to ignore Him, has sent His messengers to every nation.<sup>655</sup> Referring to the verse that God “created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and, from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women”<sup>656</sup> he states that “as God is one, so is humanity one” since they were created from a “single soul”. Moreover, not only has humanity “one origin” but God has a single purpose even in human diversity. God, as Ayoub believes, points to this purpose in the verse “We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God wary among you”.<sup>657</sup> He holds that the final goal of God is to manifest “unity in diversity”. Therefore, to fulfil this purpose, we need to learn about each other through dialogue.<sup>658</sup> To Ayoub, diversity is not a danger, but rather a divine blessing<sup>659</sup> which, when illumined by dialogue, should direct us towards unity. By this interpretation, dialogue would become a religious duty rather than a mere social necessity.

Ayoub acknowledges that some “deep and violent conflicts” between Islam and Christianity have taken place during the past centuries in which the church’s exclusivist claims of salvation have been instrumental and which have caused tragic consequences even for Christianity. In the same way, the Qur’an also makes exclusive claims<sup>660</sup> which are confirmed even by many contemporary commentators. Moreover, both Christians and Muslims have asserted that they possess the “final and universal expression of the Truth”. These exclusivist claims unfortunately contradict

---

<sup>654</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 9.

<sup>655</sup> *The Qur'an*. 4:165.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.* 4:1.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.* 49:13.

<sup>658</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths: Islam and the Challenge of Interreligious Dialogue," *The Drew Gateway* 58, no. 3 (1989). 52

<sup>659</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15.

<sup>660</sup> See; *The Qur'an*. 3:19, 95.

the basic principle of both, that “God created all human beings and He is a God of love who wishes the guidance and salvation of all His creatures”. He concludes that the conflict and hostility between faiths have stemmed from exclusivist doctrines.<sup>661</sup> It is because of this exclusivist attitude that religions have played a remarkable role in many wars and conflicts in history. As Ian G. Barbour notes, when the “absolute claims” of religion to religious reality and truth were combined with “political and military power, it led to religious persecution, crusades, holy wars, and colonial imperialism, all in God’s name”.<sup>662</sup>

Although we cannot underestimate the hidden political motivation and worldly desires that went under the name of religion, religious communication and dialogue could have moderated the religious wars of the past. It seems that Ayoub is referring to Küng’s dictum that there is “no peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions”.<sup>663</sup> For Ayoub, this highlights the need for, and the significance of, religious dialogue.

However, dialogue cannot take place in vacuum. It cannot happen unless the right context is available for it and its prerequisites are duly met. Ayoub is certainly not ignorant for this fact and has suggested its conditions and foregrounds.

### **5.1.3 Ayoub and the Foreground of Dialogue**

Dialogue is a capacity of human beings with which God has greatly privileged them over other creatures. Unfortunately, dialogue between Catholic Christians and adherents of other religions, as Richards states, was banned due to “mutual ignorance” until 1965. The “declaration of the Second Vatican Council” encouraged Roman Catholic Christians to engage in dialogue.<sup>664</sup> However, today two kinds of Christian dialogue may be distinguished, namely, “ecumenism and interfaith dialogue”. The first refers to the dialogue between Christian communities, that is,

---

<sup>661</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 42-6.

<sup>662</sup> Barbour, *Religion and Science*.308. See also; Küng, *Tracing the Way*. xv; Hans Küng, "Religion, violence and 'holy wars'," *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (2005). 253, 259.

<sup>663</sup> Küng, *Tracing the Way*. 266.

<sup>664</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 11.

between Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. The second denotes dialogue between Christians and the people of other faiths.<sup>665</sup>

However, as Tillich states, the occurrence of successful dialogue depends on the existence of a “common ground which makes both dialogue and conflicts possible”.<sup>666</sup> Ayoub holds that today Muslims and Christians should review the significant outlines of their history and relationships in order to understand their own traditions.<sup>667</sup> He highlights the common grounds of these two religions because knowing the common grounds encourages them to enter more profoundly into dialogue and reduce the misunderstandings between them.

Ayoub refers to some of these similarities by showing how similar the birthplaces of Jesus and Muhammad were before they started their prophetic missions, and how close their teachings were to each other. First, God sent Jesus when different “religions proliferated in the Mediterranean basin”. Some people sought their ideals amongst the “mystery religions,” others in the thoughts of the “ancient Greek philosophers”. In this situation God sent Jesus with the call to “morality and with a synthesis of the truth” that societies were seeking. Islam, similarly, arose in the Arabian Peninsula when many Arab people were aware of the “futility of their ancient religious” acts and were seeking the truth.<sup>668</sup>

Second, in both religions, the love and mercy of God are immeasurable, that is, they are shown to all human beings, together with “His providential acts in human history”.<sup>669</sup> Third, both claim that “ultimate power belongs to” Him alone, and “human authority” should manifest His divine acts and power.<sup>670</sup> Fourth, according to both the Qur'an and the New Testament, God has not abandoned people without divine guidance and has always communicated with them.<sup>671</sup> Fifth, both hold that

---

<sup>665</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 9. Ayoub refers to another classification of dialogue. See, Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 68.

<sup>666</sup> Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). 62.

<sup>667</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 9.

<sup>668</sup> Ibid. 9-10

<sup>669</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65.

<sup>670</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 32.

<sup>671</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11. See also; Hep, 1:1. ; *The Qur'an*. 35:24.

they convey “the final message of salvation” and perpetual “bliss for the world”.<sup>672</sup> Sixth, the worship of God, in the eyes of both religions, is not confined to prayer only: performing good deeds is considered an aspect of worship as well. The proper believer is a person who, with perfect conviction, attempts to console those who mourn, visits the infirm and prepares food for the hungry.<sup>673</sup> These similar features, for Ayoub, can encourage the theologians of both religions to engage in constructive dialogue.

In the light of these comparable characteristics, Ayoub holds that dialogue between Muslims and Christians should be a “dynamic and creative engagement” not between enemies but between friends, as the Qur’an calls it.<sup>674</sup> He stresses that even the Qur’an does not criticize Christians for the “deification of Jesus”, nor considers this belief an “outright *kufir* or rejection of faith”. Rather it refers to it as an exaggerated notion (*ghuluww*).<sup>675</sup> His enthusiasm for dialogue makes him ignore certain verses in which deification of Jesus is considered as *kufir* like 5:17 and 5:72-3.<sup>676</sup> He argues that, according to the verse “surely you will find the nearest of them in affection to the faithful to be those who say ‘We are Christians’. That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not arrogant”<sup>677</sup> the Qur’an presents two important affirmations which even now can motivate Muslim and Christian theologians to join in fruitful dialogue. The first affirmation is that “the nearest people in amity to the Muslims” are the Christians. The second is that the Christian priests and monks are thirsty for the truth. Weeping tears of appreciation for Allah’s guidance, they will accept the truth when they find it.<sup>678</sup>

In his commentary on the verse, Tabataba’i has elaborated this further. He states that the Qur’an gives three reasons for this closeness. First, there are more religious

---

<sup>672</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65.

<sup>673</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15.

<sup>674</sup> The Qur’an. 3:64.

<sup>675</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 64-5.

<sup>676</sup> It says, “They are certainly faithless who say, “Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary” *The Qur’an*. 5:17; “They are certainly faithless who say, “Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.” But the Messiah had said, “O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.....They are certainly faithless who say, “Allah is the third person of a trinity,” while there is no god except the One God” *ibid*. 5:72-3.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid*. 5:82.

<sup>678</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 64.

scholars in Christianity than in other religions. Second, Christians are often pious and God-fearing. Third, they are not arrogant. He concludes that these three features help them to have the closest friendship to Muslims. Moreover, these reasons are the keys to their felicity and salvation.<sup>679</sup>

To conclude, Ayoub believes that there is a solid ground for dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Islam and Christianity possess many similarities and if theologians of each faith appreciate these features in their respective religions and want to embark on dialogue, they are well equipped for it by examining these significant similarities. However, as dialogue needs the right context, it needs a defined purpose, too. Dialogue cannot take place in the air and with no clear objective in mind. Many instances of dialogue arranged in our time lack a clear purpose and, consequently, produce no result. This point has not escaped Ayoub's attention, and he has elaborately discussed both the aims and the prerequisites of dialogue.

#### **5.1.4 Ayoub and the Aims of Dialogue**

For Ayoub, dialogue can have multifarious goals which could be attained together or one at a time. However, the primary objective is that both sides should try to understand each other. Thus, Muslims should realise that Christians do not worship three gods but one, and similarly the Christians must know that Muslims also worship God not Muhammad.<sup>680</sup>

---

<sup>679</sup> Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 6 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996). 81-2.

<sup>680</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 55. The urgency of such objective can be shown with what Professor Hugh Goddard states regarding the unawareness of Christians and Muslims of each other's teachings. He mentions that while Muslims and Christians together comprise "a third and a half of the world's population", the level of knowledge and the mutual understanding of the followers of these two faiths, "is often very low" and they are not aware of each other's essential beliefs. In other words, "mutual ignorance is far more widespread than mutual understanding". Goddard tries to show the degree of this ignorance with a very interesting example. A Christian "school teacher" asks his Muslim pupil why Muslims worship pigs. The surprised student, in the course of conversation, finds what has led his teacher to such misunderstanding. The teacher was aware that the Hindu community did not consume beef due to the holiness of cows in their faith. He also knew that Muslims avoid pork and thus inferred that it was the sacredness of the pig that prevents Muslims from eating pork. Hugh Goddard, *Christians and Muslims from Double Standards to Mutual Understanding* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995). 1.

Ayoub not only believes that dialogue helps the two parties to “know each other”, but also claims that the process of dialogue helps the followers of each faith to know their own faith better and strengthens their previously held beliefs. Conversion, therefore, is not the common purpose; instead, they attempt together to see God’s power conducted in their own culture and history.<sup>681</sup> Thus, Ayoub maintains that the first aim of dialogue is for Muslims and Christians to find a better understanding of each other’s beliefs. Secondly, having understood each other’s faiths, they can aim to further strengthen their previously held beliefs through dialogue.

Having secured these aims, the third stage of dialogue, and one of its most important goals, is to bring about an atmosphere of “peaceful coexistence” in society.<sup>682</sup> Ayoub declares that the ideal goal that the Qur’an delineates is not only peaceful relations and co-existence between Muslims and Christians but the absolute disappearance of “enmity” and creation of a mentality that promotes “mutual respect”. He adds that the Qur’an praises some pious priests and monks for their good relations with Muslims at the time of Prophet Muhammad. They were so pious that when they heard the Qur’anic verses their eyes became full of “tears because of the truth that they recognize. They say, ‘Our Lord, we believe; so write us down among the

---

<sup>681</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 55-6. It is important to know that Ayoub is not alone in this observation. Rodrigues and Harding, trying to prove that the study of other religions may enrich one’s comprehension of his own faith, refer to the words of Goethe, the German poet and philosopher. To promote the value of acquiring another language, Goethe maintained that “a person who knows only one language actually knows none”. Similarly, Rodrigues and Harding affirm that considering other religions can deepen a believer’s convictions about his own religion. Just as learning the second language does not inevitably weaken the learner’s capacity to use his mother tongue, the study of other traditions does not necessarily shake one’s personal religious convictions. Rather it may encourage one to contemplate some of their religious beliefs in greater depth. In order to examine Buddhism, we do not need to turn Buddhist but it surely helps us to “understand the Buddhist conception of reality well enough to grasp why such a perspective is appealing to the millions who adhere to that tradition”. A researcher of religions, by gathering “new terminology” and different perceptions of humanity’s status and the goals of his existence in other religions, can expand his overall perception of religion”. Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 8-9. Similarly, Watt, referring to Thomas Merton’s view of the significance of dialogue, argues that it enables the participants to learn from another tradition the religious values that they found previously in their own religion. It not only removes the negative images they knew from other faiths but leads to a “more positive” understanding of their own religion. Merton, as Watt reports, writes in this regard, “The more I am able to affirm others, to say ‘yes’ to them in myself, by discovering them in myself and myself in them, the more real I am. I will be a better Catholic, not if I can *refute* every shade of Protestantism, but if I can affirm the truth in it and still go further”. He adds that Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others can be better believers if they do the same. Watt, *Religious Truth*. 91-2. See also; Cupitt, *Sea of Faith*. 171-2.

<sup>682</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 58.

witnesses””.<sup>683</sup> Ayoub concludes that the ultimate purpose of dialogue is to create “mutual respect” and amity between the two communities.<sup>684</sup>

To show the tolerant approach of Islam, Ayoub contends that the Qur’an acknowledges Christians’ “good intentions” even when their acts were wrong according to Islam. Referring to the verse “as for monasticism, they innovated it. We had not prescribed it for them only seeking Allah’s pleasure. Yet they did not observe it with due observance. So, We gave to the faithful among them their [due] reward”,<sup>685</sup> Ayoub adds that some Christians, in order to receive God’s pleasure, invented monasticism. Although Islam opposes monasticism, the Qur’an acknowledges their sincere intentions and their desire for reward. The Qur’anic acknowledgement of difference and acceptance “of its value, is the clearest sign of tolerance and accommodation”.<sup>686</sup>

The fourth stage of dialogue and its ultimate goal, Ayoub maintains, is “mutual recognition”.<sup>687</sup> In the eyes of Islam, the Old and the New Testaments are “sources of guidance and light” which believers should make use of in order to resolve their disagreement.<sup>688</sup> While Islam and Christianity lay much stress upon “religious tolerance”,<sup>689</sup> the followers of the revealed religions, instead of “rejection, rivalry and competition”, should try to reach “mutual recognition,” which the Qur’an considers an ideal aim. He adds that Islam and Christianity contain many common features, far more than Muslim and Christian theologians acknowledge.<sup>690</sup> Islam “legislates for a pluralistic society in which diverse religious communities can live side by side in mutual and creative acceptance that would far transcend mere tolerance”.<sup>691</sup> In order to earn peaceful relations and the gratitude of the Jews and Christians, the Qur’anic verses and the “early prophetic tradition” recognized their

---

<sup>683</sup> *The Qur’an*.5:82-5.

<sup>684</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context."20; Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 54.

<sup>685</sup> *The Qur’an*. 57: 27.

<sup>686</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 20. For more information about monasticism in Christianity see; Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). 181-5. John B Noss holds that St. Anthony was the first monk from Egypt. Noss, *Man’s Religions*. 448.

<sup>687</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 20.

<sup>688</sup> *The Qur’an*.5:46-7.

<sup>689</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 32.

<sup>690</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 20-2.

<sup>691</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 39.

prior claims and those of their Books “as bearers of divine truth”. Prophet Muhammad, he adds, in order to bring Islam closer to the People of the Book, removed the two most significant social obstacles, that is, “dietary and marriage restrictions”. These barriers could further separate the followers of these three revealed religions.<sup>692</sup> In this way, Islam “with all its richness” has kept open the door of debate and dialogue with other faiths.<sup>693</sup>

However, Ayoub notes that dialogue would not be possible without its necessary prerequisites. These prerequisites are what he elaborately tries to explain.

### **5.1.5 Prerequisites of Dialogue**

As mentioned before, Ayoub strongly believes that Christianity and Islam have much more in common than their theologians usually think.<sup>694</sup> Unfortunately, these similarities have not yet paved the way for truthful dialogue between them. While all the major religious traditions, as S. H. Nasr states, “preach peace”,<sup>695</sup> their theologians have chosen to tread the path of conflict with each other. It is clear that fruitful dialogue has some prerequisites that cannot be disregarded without facing problems in establishing candid communication. The aim of this section is to examine the prerequisites of dialogue as Ayoub sees them.

#### **5.1.5.1 The First Prerequisite: Insider Presentation**

The first prerequisite for fruitful dialogue is that the adherents of each tradition should present their own faith in dialogical activity. Muslims views should be presented by Muslims and Christian views by Christians. Ayoub, as Siddiqui narrates, holds that Christians and Muslims should not “engage in dialogical activities on the basis of what they think they know or understand of what the religion of the other is all about”. It means that before the participants discuss the

---

<sup>692</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 19. For the verses see; *The Qur'an*.5:5

<sup>693</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 3.

<sup>694</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 22.

<sup>695</sup> Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring the Values for Humanity* (New York: Harper One, 2004). 215.



religious and sacred realms of each other's belief, they must "listen and learn". Muslim interlocutors, therefore, should not interpret and judge Christian beliefs according to Islamic texts but should instead try to understand and judge them on the basis of Christian sources and terms.<sup>696</sup> Ayoub emphasises again and again that Muslims should seek to comprehend "what Christians think of themselves" not what they think of Christianity.<sup>697</sup>

The idea of insider presentation is not a unique view of Ayoub. It has been echoed by some scholars of the field. Watt, for example, emphasises that, in order to create a constructive dialogue, each faith must present "its understanding" of itself to the followers of other traditions. This may help to remove the negative pictures held by other traditions.<sup>698</sup> Ninian Smart (1927-2001), the Scottish religious scholar, as Rodrigues and Harding tell us, refers to the same fact when he states that scholars who wish to properly understand other religions should "'walk in the moccasins' of the religious insider". In this way, the rituals, convictions, "myths, ethics" and experiences of other religions become more understandable.<sup>699</sup> Küng points out the unfair treatment of Islam in Christian polemics. He states that usually the negative image of Islamic teachings is "compared with an ideal" image of Christianity in the West. Thus, he advises Christians to "understand Islam as it understands itself".<sup>700</sup>

#### **5.1.5.2 The Second Prerequisite: Equal and Mutual Acceptance**

The second prerequisite for an ideal dialogue, according to Ayoub, is that each side should consider the other side as an equal partner. Christians and Muslims should accept that they are equal in "humanity and dignity" and even in the "claim for religious authenticity". It implies that both can offer "moral and spiritual resources" for guidance and salvation.<sup>701</sup> Therefore, dialogue is not a battlefield or a competition. The participants are spiritual neighbours, not competing contenders.

---

<sup>696</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 66-7.

<sup>697</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 104.

<sup>698</sup> Watt, *Religious Truth*. 94.

<sup>699</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 83.

<sup>700</sup> Küng, *Tracing the Way*. 237-8

<sup>701</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 66.

Referring to the inimical attitudes of great religions in the past,<sup>702</sup> Watt holds that if the participants know that they are “partners and not rivals”, the domain of collaboration will increase. In consequence, the spiritual life and prosperity of nations will improve.<sup>703</sup> Each partner in dialogue, therefore, should convince his colleague that his religion contains truth that, via its comprehensive teachings, can offer the way to felicity and salvation. A Christian, for instance, should be able to create through dialogue a spiritual hunger that his faith can relieve. Competition in dialogue is harmful, unless the speakers want to compete for what Küng calls a “deeper understanding of God”, which is much to be desired.<sup>704</sup>

Ayoub holds that a partner in dialogue should not depreciate his partner’s faith. It not only diminishes the space for dialogue but also creates polemic and, consequently, generates a “desire for war rather than for dialogue”. He adds that the writings of “St John of Damascus” which present Islam as “an inferior religion” were a foretaste of past conflicts.<sup>705</sup>

#### **5.1.5.3 The Third Prerequisite: Objectivity**

The third prerequisite of constructive dialogue is that both partners should observe, as far as they can, “absolute fairness and objectivity” when they compare each other’s religions. They should, in evaluating their religions, compare and appreciate the good elements with each other and compare the bad elements with each other. Thus, the benefits of one tradition should not be evaluated in terms of the shortcomings of another tradition. Moreover, the misdeeds of the followers of one faith in the past “must not be covered up or excused by wrongly imputing” the same misbehaviour to the adherents of the other faith. Ayoub does not encourage religious interlocutors to dismiss such actions by religious adherents in the past but stresses that these deeds stemmed from the impiety or frailty of human beings, not from their divine teachings. Moreover, the religious texts of one faith should not be considered

---

<sup>702</sup> Watt, *Religious Truth*. 89.

<sup>703</sup> Ibid. 108.

<sup>704</sup> Küng, *Tracing the Way*. 238.

<sup>705</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 99-100.

as “criteria to judge the truth or errors of the other”.<sup>706</sup> The reason for this is that the religious text of every faith is valid for that faith only. Therefore, the mere condemnation of the notion of the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus by Islamic texts cannot be the only option for Muslims exploring Christianity. Muslims and Christians, in order to prove or refute their beliefs, should rely on a common language, that is to say, on intellectual arguments.

#### **5.1.6 Conclusion**

Ayoub has a detailed thought on, and experience of, dialogue. Based on that, he advises us regarding the foregrounds, aims and prerequisites of fruitful dialogue between Islam and Christianity. Ayoub suggests that the theologians involving themselves in constructive dialogue should be aware of the common grounds occupied by most religions. If they are, it can encourage and smoothen the path for dialogue and reduce points of difference. The main question in dialogue is what it intends to achieve and what are interlocutors going to use dialogue for? A variety of purposes for dialogue have been proposed. The primary object of dialogue is that two faiths should be introduced to each other by an insider presentation. This step can remove some misunderstandings that create high walls among religious people. The next step is to let theologians strengthen their own beliefs via dialogue. They should not attempt to change their partner’s religion, but both attempt together to see God’s grace permeating their history and culture. Religious thinkers, therefore, should go on to study not only the teachings of their own faith but also the deep and spiritual teachings of other traditions. The next step is that they should both, in the practice of dialogue, try to create peaceful coexistence of all religions in society. The ideal purpose of dialogue is mutual respect and amity.

Fruitful dialogue, like any other undertaking, has its own prerequisites. Each partner should present himself in dialogue while they consider the other side their equal. The partners, in other words, should admit that they are equal in dignity and humanity and even in religious authority.

---

<sup>706</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 67.

However, all of these arguments hinge on a worldview which allows diversity in religious beliefs and the equal claims of religions to truth and authenticity. Unless we have resolved this matter, the above conditions for dialogue would not materialise. And this is what I will explore in the next part from Ayoub's point of view.

## **5.2 The Second Part: Islam and Diversity of Religions**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

Having addressed the views of Ayoub on the importance of dialogue, its aims, prerequisites and obstacles, we now need to discuss the second aspect of his narrative reading Islam and the diversity of religions.

As mentioned before, due to the strong interrelationship of the people of different religious persuasions in the modern world, it is impossible for the adherents of any particular religion to confine themselves to learning their own religious teachings only and disregarding other dispensations. The pluralistic world of religions, as Terry O'Keeffe states, is a fact that believers and unbelievers alike acknowledge. This fact creates problems for certain religious believers since religions usually offer apparently incompatible pictures of truth and conflicting versions of the way toward salvation.<sup>707</sup> The interrelation of different faiths with competing interpretations of truth obliges Muslim thinkers to examine the position of other religions according to Islamic teachings. This part aims to look at the views of Ayoub on diversity of religions and its implications. It will first look at his classification of religions. Second, it will address the question of the validity of non-revealed religions. Third, it will consider a rational understanding of revealed religions. Next, it classifies their teachings into contradictory and non-contradictory and tries to address the problem of contradictory teachings of the revealed religions. Fifth, it examines what the Qur'an has to say on the validity of the revealed religions. Finally, it addresses Ayoub's critical views of some Muslim exclusivists.

---

<sup>707</sup> O'keeffe, "Religion and Pluralism." 61.

### 5.2.2 Ayoub and Classification of Religions

As noted in the previous chapter, theologians suggest different ways of classifying religions from different perspectives.<sup>708</sup> Ayoub does not refer to these classifications, however, as other Muslim thinkers do, he leans towards classifying religions into revealed and non-revealed ones.

This classification of religion is consistent throughout his works. He holds that, from the Islamic perspective, the foundations of religion rest on revelation. There are many examples and much evidence in his work, of which two items claim our immediate attention. First, he states that, in the eyes of Muslims, the Qur'an is the voice of God, which has been revealed to man in order to guide him in the course of his life. On many occasions the verses of the Qur'an were revealed in order to reply to particular questions. However, "The answers given are seen by Muslims to be general principles, moral imperatives, or precepts applicable to all times and places". He highlights, for example, that the Prophet's family, which the Qur'an addresses directly,<sup>709</sup> is considered "by Muslims to be a model for all families and all societies in the world".<sup>710</sup> According to this argument, it can be concluded that God and His messages (i.e., His revelations) are to be seen as a foundation and principle of religion.

The second item of evidence which shows the significance of revelation for Ayoub is that the Qur'an classifies mankind into two groups: those who receive God's message and believe in One God (*muwahhid*) and those who "associate other gods with God" (*mushrik*).<sup>711</sup> Ayoub points out that this message has been sent to all

---

<sup>708</sup> For instance, Küng divides the religions according to their founders into a- the mystic-centred b- wisdom-centred c- prophetic-centred. Küng, *Tracing the Way*. xiii.

<sup>709</sup> See, *The Qur'an*. 33:32.

<sup>710</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life and Practice," in *The Muslim Almanac*, ed. Azim A. Nanji (London/New York: Gale Research Inc, 1995). 19-20.

<sup>711</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the Qur'an divides people into three major groups; believers, hypocrites (*munaḥfiq*) and disbelievers (*kafir*). The believer is a person who believes in one God sincerely and practises His precepts. The hypocrite is a person who claims that he believes in God, but his claim is untrue. Disbelievers include idolaters (*mushrik*), atheists and generally anyone who does not accept Prophet Muhammad as a messenger. See; *The Qur'an*. 1:3-20. Ayoub's classification does not seem totally in agreement with the above.

nations since God has sent a messenger to every people to elucidate God's teachings and laws.<sup>712</sup>

These two items of evidence show that Ayoub lays much stress upon the significance of God and His messages in different societies. It indicates that he is in favour of classifying religions into revealed and non-revealed. The revealed religions are those that stem from the unseen world and their founders, the prophets, claim clearly that they receive all their teachings from God. In other words, a religion of this kind is not produced in its founder's mind, but instead comes through his receiving divine messages. The non-revealed religions, in contrast, are those that do not receive their inspiration from revelation. The founders of such religions neither consider themselves divine prophets selected by God nor declare that they convey His teachings.

Having classified the world's religions in this way, now we have to examine the question of validity of non-revealed religions from Ayoub's perspective.

### **5.2.3 Ayoub and the Question of Validity of Non-Revealed Religions**

As revelation, in the eyes of Ayoub, is considered a great pillar of religion, he does not accept the validity of religions that are not based on revelation. He clearly asserts that "the Qur'an views true religion to be that which is based only on revelation".<sup>713</sup> This implies that those religions that are not based on revelation cannot be considered true religions in his view. He pinpoints that the "ultimate legitimacy" of religions such as Christianity and Judaism is "based on Divine revelation".<sup>714</sup> Moreover, he asserts, "a true religion is a faith in revealer God and His revelations".<sup>715</sup> Thus, the non-prophetic religions cannot be considered as true religions.

Ayoub argues that God is "Merciful and Compassionate". In "His infinite Mercy", He invites people to approach Him through His Divine Prophets and man can

---

<sup>712</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

<sup>713</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23.

<sup>714</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 52.

<sup>715</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 39.

achieve salvation only through “prophetic guidance”.<sup>716</sup> In his eyes, having a revealed Book is one of the criteria on which the authenticity of a genuine religion can be determined. Thus, he holds that the authenticity of other religions depends on possessing divine scripture.<sup>717</sup> If they can prove that they possess a revealed Book and benefit from divine revelation through a prophet, they can be considered as valid religions from the Islamic perspective.

Ayoub holds that Muslim thinkers have not expanded their research far on the nature and teachings of the non-revealed religions. He refers to this lack of research and states that monotheistic faiths find no great problem in recognizing each other’s prophets, but “this task becomes far more complex in the case of the Wisdom religions of India and China, and the native traditions of Africa and the Americas”.<sup>718</sup>

Ayoub, moreover, asserts clearly that the authenticity and the “truth claim of any religion” should be laid down on certain principles. The most important of these is that “a true religion must be enshrined in a divinely revealed scripture or sacred law”, something that is missing in non-revealed religions.<sup>719</sup> However, this need not imply that all the teachings of the non-revealed religions are false. Rather, as Ayoub states, they are in some ways similar to revealed religions. For instance, the “Ancient Indian wisdom” still possesses one of the greatest messages mainly for the followers of revealed religions. They teach us that the divine can be entirely apparent in our everyday life “without ceasing to be Divine, and that to be truly human is to be transcendent”.<sup>720</sup> So, although Ayoub have us believe that the non-revealed religions, due to their nature, cannot be considered true and valid, he concedes that they convey some good messages to human beings in general.

Having discussed the question of non-revealed religions, we now have to turn to Ayoub’s views on revealed religions and the question of their diversity.

---

<sup>716</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice* (London: The Open Press Limited, 1989). 63.

<sup>717</sup> He holds that this criterion “could be extended to include all other faiths based on scriptures”. He adds that the Muslims “soon did as they treated first the Zoroastrians and later the Hindus as People of the Book”. See; Ayoub, “Islam and Christianity: Between.” 34.

<sup>718</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 110.

<sup>719</sup> Ayoub, “Introduction.” 2.

<sup>720</sup> Ayoub, “The Word of God and the Voices.” 54-57.

#### 5.2.4 The Nature of Revealed Religions

According to Islamic traditional view, as Ayoub states, God sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand Apostles to guide humankind. They can be divided into two groups: messengers and Prophets. The first are those whom God sent with a book (*shari'ah*), while the second are those who are generally responsible for advising people without presenting a new revelatory book.<sup>721</sup>

Islam maintains, according to Ayoub, that every human being is created “with an innate knowledge of God”. This knowledge is a “state of innocent faith, a state (*fitrah*) of the original creation expressed anew in every child”. He interprets the verse “So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind”<sup>722</sup> to mean that human beings are aware of a primitive and comprehensive knowledge of Allah.<sup>723</sup> In order to endorse this primitive awareness in man, he refers to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad that “every child is born on the basis of the *fitrah*”. This means that human beings were created to inherently incline to God and the good. Man is also able to develop or reduce such a potential power.<sup>724</sup>

Ayoub believes that man, due to such primordial information and “innate knowledge of God”, can discriminate between good and bad and can achieve the ultimate Truth. It may be asked what the rationale of prophethood is, if human beings, illumined by the primordial *fitrah*, can follow God’s way to the final Truth. In other words, if human beings can realize the Truth, why did God send numerous Prophets?

From the Islamic standpoint, Ayoub explains, man, before coming into existence, promised God to obey Him. The Qur’an says,

---

<sup>721</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 33-5. See also; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 110; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 32; Ayoub, "The Word of God and the Voices." 61. Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "The Word of God in Islam," *Muslim-Greek Orthodox Relation* 31, no. 1-2 (1986). 72. For a short biography of the *Ulu al- 'Azm*'s Prophets please see; Ayoub, "The Islamic Tradition." 350-4.

<sup>722</sup> *The Qur'an*. 30:30.

<sup>723</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Revelation and Salvation: Towards an Islamic View of History," *International Journal of Shi'i Studies* 1 (Fall 2013). 48.

<sup>724</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 22.



When your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants and made them bear witness over themselves, [He said to them,] "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes indeed! We bear witness." [This], lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed we were unaware of this'.<sup>725</sup>

Interpreting this verse, Ayoub argues that God's communication with human beings dates back to the prehistoric world when they were taken out as tiny particles from the loin of Adam. There and then God made a covenant with human beings to accept Him as their Lord and they all accepted this covenant. This primordial communication "was the covenant which Allah made with human beings to 'hear and witness' to His absolute sovereignty and lordship over all creation".<sup>726</sup>

Now, returning to the question of the *raison d'être* of prophethood, it could be argued that although humans, due to their primordial *fitrah*, can find the path of Truth, this primordial *fitrah* could be weakened to such an extent that it can lose its effectiveness to lead to the Truth. Ayoub argues that while human beings carry the teachings of the *fitrah*, they also have a propensity to follow their "irrational *nafs*, or carnal soul". Obeying the carnal soul can weaken and ultimately extinguish the *fitrah*.<sup>727</sup> In other words, the *fitrah* can become incompetent to see the Truth. It is incumbent upon God to send the Prophets to remind human beings and rectify their primordial *fitrah*. Ayoub maintains that the function of the Prophets, therefore, is to guide human beings via divine revelation to understand and "live the full implications of this" innate knowledge of God (*fitrah*).<sup>728</sup>

Ayoub maintains that if we want to reach our "divine origin" and the Truth, we are in need of infallible leaders "who have themselves trodden the way before us". They are the messengers of God. They are obliged to awaken human beings to the "innate state which is implanted" by God.<sup>729</sup> They are sent to remind humankind of their covenant. Ayoub states that, under this covenant, the Prophets were obliged to remind man of "their obligation to the one and only sovereign Lord and warn them

---

<sup>725</sup> *The Qur'an*. 7:172.

<sup>726</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 62-3; Ayoub, "Revelation and Salvation." 48-9; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 30-1; Ayoub, "Law and Grace in Islam." 222.

<sup>727</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 22.

<sup>728</sup> Ibid. 62. See also; Daniel B. Clendenin, *Many Gods, Many Lords: Christianity Encounters World Religions* (Michigan: Baker Books, 1990). 52-3.

<sup>729</sup> Ayoub, "The Word of God and the Voices." 62.

against heedlessness and disobedience”.<sup>730</sup> He adds that God is Compassionate and Merciful and due to His “infinite Mercy”, He has called mankind back to Him time after time in the words of numerous Prophets.<sup>731</sup>

According to Ayoub, therefore, Prophets have two duties, to revive the primordial *fitrah* and to remind people of their covenant with God. This idea is just an echo of what is reported from Imam Ali where he says that God sent His apostles in order to remind mankind to keep its pledge with the Lord and to discover, show and remind them of their primordial *fitrah*.<sup>732</sup> God, therefore, bestowed upon human beings two prophets: the inner prophet, that is, the *fitrah* and the outer Prophets, who begin with Adam and end with Muhammad.

Being familiar with their initial duties, the divine Prophets are required to convey to man God’s messages, which are called religion (*din*). Although the *fitrah* and intellect are useful for humankind in attaining the Truth, they are not sufficient. The different and conflicting perceptions of human beings in the realm of politics, economics and so on reveal the incapacity of these two sources to bring man to the Truth. It is incumbent upon God to bestow His infallible teachings to humankind via reliable Prophets.

This background to Ayoub’s view of the revealed religions enables us to investigate their validity in Ayoub’s eyes.

### **5.2.5 Ayoub and the Validity of Revealed Religions**

Ayoub states that “the model of human life is the prophetic model”.<sup>733</sup> For Ayoub, God, His messengers and revelation play a pivotal role in human welfare. He states that the claim to truth of any religion hinges on revelation. The validity of Abrahamic faiths comes from being revelation-centred. The Qur’an, he concludes, confirms the truth of the religions of “Jews, Christians and Sabaeans”, since they are all

---

<sup>730</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 31.

<sup>731</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 63; Ayoub, "Revelation and Salvation." 49.

<sup>732</sup> Al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*. 20.

<sup>733</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 32.

revelatory.<sup>734</sup> He adds that the “ultimate legitimacy” of the monotheistic religions is “based on Divine revelation”.<sup>735</sup>

But if the source of all revealed religions is one, then what is the reason for their plurality? Is there a difference between them? If yes, do they differ in essence or in form? Is the validity of these religions longitudinal or horizontal? The aim of this part is to answer these questions from Ayoub’s standpoint.

Ayoub, like many theologians, proposes three kinds of approach to the fact of religious plurality: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. According to religious exclusivists, only one specific (i.e., their own) religion holds the truth and can provide salvation for its followers. Inclusivists believe that there is only one true faith but at the same time, moral individuals of “good conscience” who follow other religions may also attain salvation. Religious pluralism maintains that all “the theistic religions”, at least, “must be recognized as legitimate ways to the Truth or Ultimate Reality”.<sup>736</sup>

Ayoub believes that there are many similarities amongst the revealed religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam since their Prophets and their sacred Books emanate from one source. He states that Prophet Muhammad believed that the previous Prophets had been chosen as exalted personages like him and their scriptures all originated from “a single archetypal heavenly source of revelation” named the “*umm al-Kitab*” (the core of the Book). He adds that “on this unity of revelation is based the Qur’anic imperative to believe in all God’s” teachings and prophets, since the religion of God is essentially one, as is the chain of prophethood. The implication of this belief is that the Qur’an requires us to have faith in all Prophets and their sacred scriptures.<sup>737</sup>

This unity of revelation shows why there are so many similarities amongst our sacred scriptures. Ayoub in many of his earlier works highlights that the common grounds

---

<sup>734</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>735</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 52. See also; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23.

<sup>736</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an," in *Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an and Sunnah*, ed. Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub (London/Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012). 40-1.

<sup>737</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

comes from the revealed Books, which supply the unity of the divine scriptures. He states that Prophet Muhammad believed his teachings to be consonant with the Old and New Testaments.<sup>738</sup> The Qur'an, he adds, considers both the Old and New Testaments to be sources of "guidance and light," making them arbitrators in any conflict for the people of the Book.<sup>739</sup> He adds that the Qur'an considers itself not as "contradicting or replacing" the previous Books, but as "confirming them".<sup>740</sup>

Ayoub refers to some of these similarities in detail. Christianity and Islam, he states, came to assert that "all human beings are equal"<sup>741</sup>, the "ultimate power belongs to God", and the authority of man must reveal His power.<sup>742</sup> Both claim that God created all man and that "He is a God of love who wishes the guidance and salvation of His creatures".<sup>743</sup> In more detail, this echoes a "long list of common beliefs and practices" which Pope John II mentioned in his speech to young people in Morocco.<sup>744</sup>

Although based on the above explanation, Ayoub believes that Abrahamic religions enjoy much in common, he agrees that they are also dissimilar in many ways. These dissimilarities are of two kinds: those which are contradictory and non-contradictory. It may be helpful here to discuss these two categories of differences and the solutions that Ayoub presents to deal with them.

#### 5.2.5.1 Contradictory Teachings of Revealed Religions

We regard two statements to be contradictory when the veracity of one statement implies the falsity of the other.<sup>745</sup> Ayoub concedes that as such there are some

<sup>738</sup> The Qur'an says, "He has sent down to you the Book with the truth confirming what was [revealed] before it, and He had sent down the Torah and the Evangel". *The Qur'an*.3:3. See also; 2:41; 2:97; 3:50; 4:47; 5:46; 5:4 and 35:31.

<sup>739</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18-20. For the verses see, *The Qur'an*. 5:46-7.

<sup>740</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>741</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11.

<sup>742</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 32.

<sup>743</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 45.

<sup>744</sup> Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 238-9.

<sup>745</sup> Abu Ali Sina, *Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyin* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1984). 74-5. See also; Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Asas al-Iqtibas* (Tehran: Danishgah-i Tehran, 1981). 98; Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996). 177-8;

contradictory teachings amongst the revealed religions.<sup>746</sup> The first of such contradictions between Islam and Christianity is their exclusive claims of universality. Both faiths claim that their religion is universal for all humankind in all places and times.<sup>747</sup> Each community claims to possess “exclusively a universal message of truth and salvation”<sup>748</sup> and knowledge of the way to “eternal bliss for the world”.<sup>749</sup> Clearly, these claims contradict each other. Islam and Christianity cannot both claim to be the single universal religion, and both cannot present the “final and universal expression of the Truth”. The exclusive claim of salvation from one faith implies that there is no room for salvation for the followers of the other religion. A contradiction obviously appears here since the two claims are mutually exclusive.

The other contradiction is about the concept and essence of revelation. This is one of the most important theological issues that make up the vast discrepancy between Christianity and Islam. For Muslims, Ayoub states, God conveyed His will and message in the form of words and sentences. “The transcendent became human, that is to say, the transcendent and eternal word of God, preserved with Him in the ‘well-guarded tablet’, took on human words” which we read and write in letters. These words were collected in the form of a Book and established the revealed word of God.<sup>750</sup>

Ayoub, in order to highlight the differences of revelation between the two faiths, refers to St John’s verse “In the beginning was the Word”. This is consonant with Islamic teachings so far. However, John goes on, “the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Ayoub accepts the first proposition that “the Word was with God”, but he argues that Islam does not admit “the Word was God”. In Islam, God exceeds his revelation.<sup>751</sup> According to St John, the Word is the mediator of creation.

---

Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy*, 3 ed. (London: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd, 1993). 305.

<sup>746</sup> It is worth mentioning here that the contradictory teachings can arise in a single religion as well. The issue of the created (*hadith*) or uncreated (*qadim*) nature of the Qur’an, for instance, was discussed by Muslims in the ninth century. It is clear that these two propositions contradict each other. Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi’i*. 40-1. See also; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. 235-303.

<sup>747</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65 and 67; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21; Ayoub, "The Qur’an in Muslim Life." 20.

<sup>748</sup> Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 232; Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 45.

<sup>749</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65.

<sup>750</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11.

<sup>751</sup> Ibid. 11-2.

However, for Muslims, as Ayoub points out, the Qur'an is not the mediator of creation, "but rather of human history". Ayoub adds that fundamental differences arise when John says, "And the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us". He concludes that, since the essence of revelation for Muslims is a Book, the Muslims cannot comprehend or agree with the belief that God could manifest Himself in Jesus Christ as a human person. In the Islamic view, God sent His message to Jesus, and Jesus was but a messenger of God.<sup>752</sup>

These disagreements sometimes go to such grave lengths that each faith, as Ayoub states, regards the other as in severe "error in its basic understanding of God, his nature and relationship to humanity and its history".<sup>753</sup> In the realm of the essence of revelation, due to crucial differences between Islam and Christianity, Ayoub thinks that it will be very difficult for the scholars of the two faiths to reach agreement.<sup>754</sup>

To the question why Jews, Christians and Muslims see things so differently while they have sacred Books in common as well as the same purposes and messages, Ayoub replies that these discords come from alterations to the text. Referring to the Qur'anic verses<sup>755</sup>, he believes that some Christians and Jews deliberately changed their scriptures (*tahrif*). These alterations were more semantic distortions (*tahrif-i ma'navi*) than verbal ones (*tahrif-i lafzi*). One of the distortions that Christians made, for instance, concerns the personality of Jesus Christ in which they considered him God or the Son of God.<sup>756</sup>

Ayoub does not present any practical or theological solution for resolving contradictory religious beliefs amongst the revealed religions. Nevertheless, he hopes that these crucial differences may be one day resolved through dialogue.<sup>757</sup> However, it is not these problematic issues in which Ayoub is most interested. His attention is

---

<sup>752</sup> Ibid. 12. Ayoub, "The Word of God." 73.

<sup>753</sup> Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 232.

<sup>754</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 12; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23.

<sup>755</sup> The Qur'an says, 'Among the Jews are those who pervert words from their meanings and say, "We hear and disobey"'. *The Qur'an*. 4:46.

<sup>756</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 101.

<sup>757</sup> Ayoub, as Siddiqui states, refers to other contradictory beliefs in Islam and Christianity. First, "Islam denies the divinity of Jesus 'without denying his special humanity'. Second, Islam denies the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, as an atonement for sinful humanity". Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 107.

more deeply drawn to the non-contradictory differences amongst the revealed religions.

#### 5.2.5.2 Non-Contradictory Differences between Revealed Religions

By non-contradictory difference between two acts, statements or concepts, we mean that the veracity of one does not imply the falsity of the other. The rate of income tax in countries A and B, for example, may be different but do not contradict each other. Both taxation laws can be correct and appropriate for their own respective countries. In the same manner, the revealed religions sometimes demonstrate dissimilarities without actually contradicting one another. The forms of worshipping God, for instance, in Christianity and Islam are different but not mutually exclusive. Thus, both can be correct and acceptable. The aim of this section is to address the *raison d'être* of such divergences amongst the revealed religions in Ayoub's view.

To begin with, Ayoub believes that religious diversity is man's normal situation. He shows this by Qur'anic dialectic, that is to say, by showing unity in diversity. He starts his argument with the claim that the Qur'an depicts a "unique worldview" regarding human society and its final destiny. This worldview is "a dialectic between diversity and unity". He claims that the "thesis of this dialectic is the absolute unity" and the oneness of God (*Tawhid*). He is one in His essence (*dhat*), in His divine attributes<sup>758</sup>, in His acts, in His lordship and in His aptness to be worshiped.<sup>759</sup>

In order to demonstrate the oneness of God, Ayoub quotes the verse "He is Allah, the One [*Ahad*]"<sup>760</sup> He states that the term *Ahad* in "Allah is One (*Ahad*)" means "one in uniqueness, one without a second, one not like any other one".<sup>761</sup> He argues that "in

---

<sup>758</sup> Such a God is Knowing, Living, Seeing, Powerful etc.

<sup>759</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 107; Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 52. For more information about these degrees, see, 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, *Shawariq al-Ilham fi Sharh Tajrid al-Kalam*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2006). 77-321; Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 19-48.

<sup>760</sup> *The Qur'an*. 112:1.

<sup>761</sup> Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani states that there are two interpretations of the unity of God in His essence: a) the "Essence of God is absolutely one and peerless; nothing analogous or similar to Him is conceivable" and b) the nature of God "is absolutely simple, non-compound, without any plurality". He adds that the verse "nor has He any equal" (112:4) alludes to the first interpretation and the verse "He is Allah, the One [*Ahad*]" (112:1) refers to the second interpretation. Sobhani,

this divine unicity is the unity of creation and its ultimate goal, which is to worship God and manifest His glory” and concludes that His creation is one and His guidance is one. Although God sent many divinely-inspired Prophets, the essence of their teachings is one. “But within this unity of creation, there must be, from the Qur’anic point of view, a diversity of human ethnic, linguistic and religious identity. This diversity is the antithesis of the thesis of the unicity of God in the Qur’an”.<sup>762</sup>

However, Ayoub also emphasizes the unity of human beings. Writing about the verse “Mankind were a single community”,<sup>763</sup> Ayoub argues that human beings started “as one” and should stay one, but now have “unity in diversity”. He holds, however, that this diversity was not the consequence of the gradual deterioration of man “from an ideal or utopian state”, “lack of divine guidance” or lack of man’s appreciation. For Ayoub, the diversity of religions is a natural feature of the life of human beings which stems from the variety of “cultures, languages, races” and diverse conditions of society.<sup>764</sup> On the unity of mankind, the Qur’an says,

Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Then Allah guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in, by His will, and Allah guides whomever He wishes to a straight path.<sup>765</sup>

Ayoub states that the term “Book” in the above verse is not used in the plural form, which could invoke the plurality of divine scriptures. Rather, it is used as a singular word, the ‘Book’ in the sense of the heavenly model and essential source of all revelations. The books that have been compiled, therefore, are the earthly samples.<sup>766</sup> In other words, the Book has a heavenly reality and the compiled scriptures are the samples and copies of that heavenly reality.

The religious direction of human beings, according to the verses mentioned above, is from unity to diversity. The animosity that resulted from diversity was not due to

---

*Doctrine of Shi‘i*. 20. In the light of what Sobhani says, Ayoub refers to the first interpretation of the oneness of God in His essence; that is, that He is peerless and unique. It may be concluded that the verse “He is Allah, the One [*Ahad*]” cannot have the first meaning. In order to refer to the first interpretation, Ayoub should have drawn on the verse “nor has He any equal”.

<sup>762</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 108.

<sup>763</sup> *The Qur’an*.2:213.

<sup>764</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 108; Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity.” 189.

<sup>765</sup> *The Qur’an*.2:213.

<sup>766</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 109.



lack of divine teachings or “human understanding”, but rather to the jealousy and hostility of human beings. Ayoub states,

we have the synthesis of this Qur’anic dialectic: it is unity in diversity. Unity is the essence of our understanding of the Oneness of God, in *Tawhid*, as expressed in the *shahada*, ‘There is no god except Allah.’ It is also the basis of the essential unity of all creation and of humankind. But diversity is a necessary consequence of geography, of language or of what we may positively call the rich variety of human civilizations.<sup>767</sup>

He adds that we are different, and this is God’s will<sup>768</sup> for, as the Qur’an states, “Had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community”.<sup>769</sup>

He states that human beings are different, and it is His will that “we are different”,<sup>770</sup> adding that the Qur’an does not criticize diversity but conflict and enmity. From the Islamic perspective, differences and diversity are good and accepted, but enmity and conflict are not.<sup>771</sup> Plurality is not bad; indeed, “it is an act of divine mercy” that we are not similar. In the light of this diversity, “we can have a rich spirituality that takes different forms and different traditions”.<sup>772</sup> He holds that the plurality of religions is the consequence of diversity in languages and races. It is, moreover, a sign of the wisdom of God in the “ordering of human society”.<sup>773</sup> Ayoub, therefore, holds that the Qur’an accepts and appreciates the plurality of religions within the unity of God. This unity, which began with Prophet Adam, continued its existence until the demise of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>774</sup>

To sum up, Ayoub concludes that the diversity of religions is a natural phenomenon in the life of humankind. It is rooted in the variety of races, languages, cultures and conditions of society. The Qur’an acknowledges the plurality of religions in the context of the unity of God. Admitting that the plurality of religions is the necessary consequence of the plurality of languages and races, Ayoub attempts to demonstrate the validity of religious pluralism, that is to say, the equal validity of all revealed

---

<sup>767</sup> Ibid.

<sup>768</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 16; Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "Islam between Ideals and Idologies: Toward a Theology of Islamic History," in *The Islamic Impulse*, ed. Barbara Freyer Stowasser (London: Croom Helm, 1987). 299-230.

<sup>769</sup> *The Qur’an*. 11:118.

<sup>770</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."189.

<sup>771</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 108-9; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."189.

<sup>772</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15.

<sup>773</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."188-9.

<sup>774</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism."110. Mahmud Aydin, from the school of ahl Sunnah, highlights Ayoub’s view. Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 38.

religions through the verses of the Qur'an, something that we have to focus on now in some detail.

#### **5.2.6 Ayoub and the Validity of Revealed Religions in the Qur'an**

From the Islamic perspective, as Ayoub tells us, the authenticity of the "truth claim of any religion" should be established according to certain principles. First, it "must be enshrined in a divinely revealed scripture or sacred law". Second, it should acknowledge the absolute oneness of God. Third, it should "enjoin dynamic" belief in God and the Day of Judgement. Fourth, it must promote "righteous living".<sup>775</sup> Ayoub finds that in addition to Islam, the revealed religions of Judaism, Christianity and Sabaeism meet these four conditions, and consequently, some Qur'anic verses confirm their truth. He adds that, although the doctrine of the Trinity was formulated by some Christian theologians in the fourth century, the Qur'an confirms that, like Judaism, Christianity believes in One God.<sup>776</sup> The Qur'an says, "Had not Allah repulsed the people from one another, ruin would have befallen the monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which Allah's Name is mentioned greatly".<sup>777</sup>

Ayoub attempts to justify religious pluralism by referring to other verses of the Qur'an. He states that there are a number of places where the Qur'an explicitly confirms religious pluralism, that is, the equal validity of the revealed religions. He makes recourse to two of the most frequently mentioned verses in the pluralist debate, that is, verses 2:62 and 5:69, the first of which was revealed at the beginning and the second was revealed at the end of Muhammad's prophetic career in Medina.<sup>778</sup> The Qur'an 2:62 says, "Indeed, the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve".

---

<sup>775</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2; Ayoub, "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an." 46.

<sup>776</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 112.

<sup>777</sup> *The Qur'an*. 22:40.

<sup>778</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 113.

Muslim pluralists, according to the literal interpretation of this verse and 5: 69, hold that there are three conditions for salvation: 1) belief in God; 2) belief in the hereafter; and 3) performing good deeds.<sup>779</sup> Therefore, Jews, Christians, Sabaeans and whoever follows the revealed Book and does good deeds will be saved. Ayoub states, “any other community that could lay credible claim to sacred scripture would have been included”.<sup>780</sup> He adds that, since this verse was revealed in two ways, first at the beginning of the Prophet’s migration and then in precisely the same words and structure at the end of his prophethood, it is plain that “neither the words nor the purport of these two identical verses was abrogated”.<sup>781</sup>

In order to justify his reading of the above verses, Ayoub refers to Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah (1904-1979), a well-known Shi‘ah commentator from Lebanon. He states that Mughniyyah wrote his interpretation in a “multi religious society” where interreligious coherence and harmony had been promoted by religious leaders while others like his contemporary prominent theologian and jurisprudent, Muhammad Jawad al-Balaghi, produced their interpretations in the narrow structure of the seminary of Najaf.<sup>782</sup>

Mughniyyah, according to Ayoub, offers a pluralistic reading of these two verses. He states that the adherents of the four groups mentioned in the two verses, so long as they are just and believe sincerely in God and His Prophets and the Last Day and do righteous deeds, they will not have any fear or grief.<sup>783</sup> In the theology and worldview of the Shi‘ah school, Ayoub states, reason (‘*aql*) and justice (‘*adl*) play an important role; they are two essential and interdependent basic principles. Since they are the foundations of true belief and consequently punishment and reward on the Day of Judgement, Mughniyyah “leaves the final judgement as to the rationality and justice of the faith of any people to God”.<sup>784</sup> On this basis, Mughniyyah believes that

---

<sup>779</sup> Ayoub, "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an." 48; Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 34. See also; Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 48; Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 346.

<sup>780</sup> Ayoub, "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an." 48.

<sup>781</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 113; Ayoub, "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an."47; Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, 1. 110.

<sup>782</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 197.

<sup>783</sup> Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Mubin* (Beirut: Mu'assasah 'Izz al-Din, 1983). 12-3.

<sup>784</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."198.

if Jews, Christians and Sabaeans fulfil these three conditions, they will be saved as this is the rule of reason and the dictum of justice.

At this point two things should be noted here. First, Mughniyyah does not mention that the issue of the final judgement of the faiths of other communities should be left to God on the Day of Judgment on the page where Ayoub refers to it. Second, it seems that Ayoub's reading of Mughniyyah is quite selective. He does not address Mughniyyah's view regarding the verses under discussion in his comprehensive commentary, *al-Tafsir al-Kashif* in which he puts forward an exclusivist reading of the verses. Referring to verses 2:62 and 5:69, Mughniyyah states that some Muslims lean towards other religions, maintaining that for God there is no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. He rejects such an interpretation saying that they know with certain knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqin*) that the Prophethood of Muhammad is denied in these religions.<sup>785</sup> As we see, Mughniyyah, in contrast to his succinct commentary (*al-Tafsir al-Mubin*), does not present a pluralistic reading of the verse. He holds that this verse refers to those who died before the prophethood of Muhammad but fulfilled good deeds according to their ethical values and the *fitrah*.<sup>786</sup>

Moreover, Mughniyyah, even in his succinct commentary (*al-Tafsir al-Mubin*), contradicting what Ayoub thinks, draws an exclusivist reading from other verses of the Qur'an. For example, in interpreting the verse "Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter",<sup>787</sup> he states that God is one, Islam is the religion of unity (*Tawhid*) and Prophet Muhammad strove in the way of God. Whoever disowns him will be considered a disbeliever.<sup>788</sup> Mughniyyah, moreover, presents the same idea on pages 26, 128, 139 and 684. These pieces of evidence, taken together, show that Mughniyyah draws an exclusivist picture of the Qur'anic verses. Yet, if we look only at the interpretation of verse 2:62 in *al-Tafsir al-Mubin* and ignore what he says regarding other verses in his comprehensive commentary (*al-Tafsir al-Kashif*) we must agree with Ayoub that Mughniyyah frames a pluralistic interpretation. It seems

---

<sup>785</sup> Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Kashif*, 7 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm al-Mala'in, 1981). 116-8.

<sup>786</sup> Ibid. 118.

<sup>787</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:85.

<sup>788</sup> Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Mubin*. 77.

that Mughniyyah, being committed to brevity in *al-Tafsir al-Mubin*, does not want to go into detail and, hence, his view on verse 2:62 is not clearly outlined there.

At any rate, Ayoub emphasizes his pluralistic reading of the Qur'anic verses by claiming that Prophet Muhammad never calls upon Jews or Christians to leave their religion and accept his teachings. Instead, he thinks that, in the verse, "Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah'",<sup>789</sup> Muhammad was calling the Christians and Jews "not to conversion to Islam, but acceptance of him as the last in the long series of prophets which they themselves recognized".<sup>790</sup> Ayoub implies by this that Christianity and Judaism were valid in Prophet Muhammad's view. Otherwise, in order to save them, he should have requested their conversion. In his other articles, Ayoub is convinced that Prophet Muhammad did not expect the Christians and Jews to abandon their traditions and embrace Islam "but only to observe God's continuous care for" human beings and to admit that he was a "genuine prophet". He stresses that the original request that the Qur'anic verses made to Christians and Jews is "simply to accept Muhammad as a Prophet and Islam as an authentic religion, without necessarily" leaving their own faiths.<sup>791</sup> He states that the Qur'anic verses do not require them to embrace "Islam as a condition for religious recognition and peaceful co-existence in Muslim domains".<sup>792</sup> Thus, they were not obliged to convert to Islam in order to live in amity and interact "positively with Muslims".<sup>793</sup> In short, the People of the Book were not requested to accept Islam unless they wished to.

To sum up, Ayoub maintains that some Qur'anic verses assert that the diversity of religions is a "sign of divine wisdom". It acknowledges "the plurality of religious communities and the essential validity of their faiths".<sup>794</sup> Prophet Muhammad "far more than Muslims have ever done", admits religious pluralism.<sup>795</sup> He did not request the Christians and Jews to give up their own traditions and embrace Islam,

---

<sup>789</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:64.

<sup>790</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 103.

<sup>791</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14; Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 53. See also; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 200, 203.

<sup>792</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23.

<sup>793</sup> Ibid.18; Ayoub, "Introduction." 3.

<sup>794</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-90.

<sup>795</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21.

but rather saw their faiths as equally valid and acceptable to Islam. For Ayoub, religious exclusivism is not compatible with the Qur'anic worldview.<sup>796</sup>

To reflect more on Ayoub's standpoint on religious pluralism, we have to address his critical views of some Muslim exclusivists, too, which I shall turn to now.

### 5.2.7 Ayoub and Muslim Exclusivism

For Ayoub, verses 2:62 and 5:69 imply that the basis of religious pluralism "is not subject to any political or theological considerations. It is rather a fact of divine wisdom operating in human history". He adds that this Qur'anic perspective on religious plurality has established considerable political and legal complications for Muslim jurists, leaders and "political ideologues" in the Islamic world. For Ayoub, most of the Muslim Qur'anic exegetes "have gone out of their way to negate this central Qur'anic teaching".<sup>797</sup>

Since the two verses under discussion are the most frequently cited verses in the pluralist discourse, Ayoub analyses the perspective of some contemporary exclusivist Muslim thinkers on these verses.<sup>798</sup> The approach of these Qur'anic interpreters, both Sunni and Shi'ah, represents "traditional as well as ideologically motivated" attitudes to the Qur'an.<sup>799</sup>

The first example for Ayoub's research is Sayyid Qutb, one of the most political and influential thinkers of his time. Qutb holds that verse 2:62 refers to the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans who preceded Prophet Muhammad. If these three groups believed in God, the Day of Judgment and fulfilled the condition of good deeds, he says, they will be saved.<sup>800</sup> This verse, therefore, does not relate to the validity or invalidity of these religions after Islam. Qutb presents his opinions more explicitly in the interpretation of verse 5:69. He says that faith and good deeds are the most

---

<sup>796</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 37.

<sup>797</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 190-1.

<sup>798</sup> For thorough historical research on the Qur'anic perspective of Christianity, see, Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). 93-128.

<sup>799</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 191.

<sup>800</sup> Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, 1. 75-6.

significant conditions for salvation. However, Muhammad is a Prophet for all human beings and has asked everyone to follow his teachings. Considering these two premises, Qutb, concludes that salvation will be possible only through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

Qutb then frames his “logical socio-political conclusion” from the above verse and declares that Muslims should not cast doubt on this conclusion that Muhammad’s teachings make up the only true religion. The worldly political pressures should not blind Muslims to the Qur’anic truth and should not persuade them that the adherents of other faiths will be accepted before God. It is not fitting for Muslims to cooperate and deal with these adherents, due to the unacceptability of their religions.<sup>801</sup>

Having mentioned the exclusivist position of Qutb, Ayoub states, “this, of course, implies that all the Qur’anic injunctions to live in amity with the people of the Book are to be ignored. It also implies that the sole aim of any relations of Muslims with other faith communities or individuals” must be bringing them to “Islam, voluntarily, or by force if necessary”. For Ayoub, Qutb’s views bring Muslims back to the old hostilities and confrontations.<sup>802</sup>

The second traditional Muslim whose views on the above verse Ayoub analyses is ‘Abd al-Qadir bin Shaybah al-Hamd (d.1921). Al-Hamd holds that verses 2:62 and 5:69 refer to an essential and permanent principle which is binding for everybody in all times and places. The principle is that nobody can enter paradise unless he believes in God and the Day of Judgment and has done good deeds. This principle, due to the notion that no one will be saved unless he follows Muhammad’s teachings, implies that he should also believe in and accept all the Prophets, specifically “their chief (*shaykh*), leader (*imam*) and master (*sayyid*)” Prophet Muhammad. Al-Hamd adds that even Prophet Jesus will follow Muhammad’s teachings when he comes back. For him, good deeds, as one of the conditions of salvation in the hereafter, should be performed according to Muhammad’s teachings.<sup>803</sup>

---

<sup>801</sup> Ibid., 2. 942.

<sup>802</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 191-2.

<sup>803</sup> ‘Abd al-Qadir Al-Hamd, *Tahdhib al-Tafsir wa Tajrid al-Ta’wil mimma Ulhiq bihi min al-Abatil wa Rad’al-Aqawil*, 5 vols., vol. 1 (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’, 1993). vol. 1, 157-8; ‘Abd al-Qadir Al-Hamd, *Tahdhib al-Tafsir wa Tajrid al-Ta’wil mimma Ulhiq bihi*

As we see, while Qutb builds up his view based on “Islamic supersessionism”, al-Hamd argues for the “superiority of Muhammad over all prophets”. Ayoub contends that “both principles are diametrically opposed to the Qur’anic theology of the universality of faith and plurality of religions and the equality of God’s messengers”.<sup>804</sup> The Qur’an states that Prophet Muhammad and all Muslim believers have “faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles. [They declare,] ‘We make no distinction between any of His apostles’”.<sup>805</sup> This verse, as Ayoub claims, refers to the plurality of traditions and equality of the Prophets.<sup>806</sup>

The third commentator whose views are analysed by Ayoub is Ayatollah Nasir Makarim (b. 1926), who presents a “juristic interpretation” of these two verses, as Ayoub sees it.<sup>807</sup> Makarim states that in the time of Prophet Muhammad, the Jews and Christians boasted to each other, each claiming that they followed the best and the perfect religion and that paradise was destined exclusively for them. The Muslims too probably boasted about Islam in the same way. The Qur’an criticizes this assumption, in view of the important consideration that the title does not matter—there is no value in nominal faith for Muslims, Jews, Christians or the followers of any other religion, especially if the component of good deeds is missing. The only acceptable and valuable divine criteria are a true belief in God and good deeds,<sup>808</sup> from which Makarim deduces that faith in God and good deeds generally play the major role in salvation. At first glance, it seems that Makarim, as Ayoub identifies, presents a “broad and pluralistic” interpretation of the verse.<sup>809</sup> For Ayoub, it means that the followers of the religions that were stated in the verse can be saved providing that they fulfil the divine criteria.

---

*min al-Abatil wa Rad’ al-Aqawil*, 5 vols., vol. 4 (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma’arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi’, 1993). 221-2.

<sup>804</sup> Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity.” 192. It should be noted that Ayoub quotes from al-Hamd, saying, *nasara* as “those who claim to follow the religion of Christ, which implies that in reality they do not. For, were they truly to follow Christ’s religion, they would be Muslims.” I could not find such a passage in al-Hamd’s book.

<sup>805</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:285.

<sup>806</sup> Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity.” 192.

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.* 198.

<sup>808</sup> Nasir Makarim, *al-Amthal fi Tafsir Kitab Allah al-Munzal*, 20 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Madrasah al-Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Talib, 2000). 249-50.

<sup>809</sup> Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity.” 198.



However, Makarim questions the idea that the verse allows the possibility of religious pluralism. He states that some Muslim pluralists take this verse as a Qur'anic ground for their view. Consequently, they believe that Jews, Christians and Sabaeans need not embrace Islam as long as they possess true belief in God and the Last Day and practice good deeds.<sup>810</sup> For Makarim, however, there are three pieces of evidence why this verse cannot be interpreted broadly and pluralistically to support the validity of other religions.

The first evidence is that the pluralistic reading of verse 2:62 clearly contradicts the verse "Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter".<sup>811</sup> Thus, verse 2:62 cannot justify the validity of other religions.

Makarim's second evidence is that the Qur'an often invites Jews and Christians to embrace Islam. If the Qur'an accepted the validity of other religions, as the Muslim pluralists claim, there would be no room for such an invitation. He, therefore, believes that the pluralistic interpretation of verse 2:62 clearly contradicts considerable portions of the Qur'anic verses.<sup>812</sup>

The third evidence is the verse "O People of the Book! You do not stand on anything until you observe the Torah and the Evangel".<sup>813</sup> It means that if Jews and Christians believe what their own Books tell them, they should naturally embrace Prophet Muhammad's teachings<sup>814</sup> since the good tidings of the advent of Muhammad, as the Qur'an claims, have been declared in their Books in detail. Thus, Jews and Christians cannot be considered proper believers unless they admit Islam.

Ayoub, however, debunks all these arguments. Regarding the first evidence, he disapproves of Makarim's reasoning and argues that he "blatantly denies this clear Qur'anic teaching". In contrast to Makarim, he holds that there is no incompatibility between the pluralistic reading of verse 2:62 and the purport of verse 3:19, 85. In Ayoub's opinion, Makarim ignores the Qur'anic fact that "the term *islam* has been

---

<sup>810</sup> Makarim, *al-Amthal*, 1. 250.

<sup>811</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:85. See also; 3:19.

<sup>812</sup> Makarim, *al-Amthal*, 1. 250.

<sup>813</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5: 68.

<sup>814</sup> Makarim, *al-Amthal*, 1. 250.

used in many senses in the Qur'an and that in neither verse does it necessarily signify the legal Islamic identity of the *ummah* but the primordial way or *sunnah* of God for all His creation, including His human creatures".<sup>815</sup>

Ayoub rejects the second evidence of Makarim with the same argument. He claims that the verses which call upon these two communities to accept Islam actually ask them to share the same Qur'anic meaning of *islam*, that is, "*sunnah* of God for all His creatures" and mankind, not especially the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>816</sup> Consequently, there is no contradiction between the pluralistic reading of verse 2:62 and the purport of 3:19, 85.

Regarding the third evidence of Makarim, Ayoub argues that verses 2:62 and 5:68 are perfectly compatible with pluralistic readings. He explains that the Qur'an requests people to admit nothing more than that Muhammad is one of the divine Prophets and that the Qur'an is a divine Book.<sup>817</sup> He implies that Jews and Christians are not required to change their beliefs and practices according to Muhammad's teachings: the mere acceptance of Muhammad as a prophet of God is sufficient. In the eyes of Ayoub, therefore, a pluralistic reading of the verse under discussion never contradicts other Qur'anic verses.

To sum up, Ayoub investigates what prominent contemporary Sunni and Shi'ah commentators of the Qur'an have to say about the most frequently cited verse in the pluralistic discourse, that is verse 2:62. He puts forward a Qur'anic argument for the validity of previous revealed religions. Unlike most Muslim scholars, he does not believe that the Qur'an demands the Jews and Christians to abandon their own Books and follow the Qur'an instead. If they have a sincere belief in God and do good deeds, they will be saved.

While some Qur'anic verses explicitly confirm religious pluralism<sup>818</sup>, other verses may accord with the spirit of exclusivism. The Qur'an says, "Indeed, with Allah

---

<sup>815</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity."199.

<sup>816</sup> Ibid.199.

<sup>817</sup> Ibid.

<sup>818</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 113.

religion is Islam”<sup>819</sup> and “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter”.<sup>820</sup> However, as Adnan Aslan states, such verses are “*mutashabih*” (ambiguous) and could be interpreted either exclusivistically or pluralistically.<sup>821</sup> For him these verses probably look “like a nose of wax” which can be easily turned and formed to any shape.<sup>822</sup>

Ayoub, however, maintains that the term ‘*islam*’, in the Qur’an is not exclusively a name for Muhammad’s teachings, but rather, it has different levels of meaning. In the first level, it refers to the “framework within which Allah created the universe”.<sup>823</sup> In other words, it refers to the state of the whole cosmos before Him.<sup>824</sup> We see that the whole world is fulfilling its task carefully. The planets of the solar system run in their specific orbits. The sun rises and sets at its precise times. They are following the “laws of nature” which God bestowed upon them. The sun, therefore, is called “*muslim* to God”, since it obeys and submits to the laws of God for the sun. Islam, in this sense, he adds, applies to the earth and the heavens, human beings and all God’s creatures. It means that all His creatures, which obey the laws of nature that He bestowed upon them, can be called “*muslim*”. This is what Ayoub names the “first and universal level of the meaning” of “*islam*” in the Qur’an.<sup>825</sup> “To Him submits whoever there is in the heavens and the earth”.<sup>826</sup>

The second level of the meaning of *islam* in the Qur’an applies only to those of mankind who believe in God and try to behave according to His will; that is, the term is employed for all those who submit willingly to His order and authority. *Islam*, therefore, can be understood as the faith of the divine Prophets, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, who are all named Muslim in the Qur’an.<sup>827</sup> In this way,

---

<sup>819</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:19.

<sup>820</sup> *Ibid.* 2:85.

<sup>821</sup> Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. 192.

<sup>822</sup> John Locke, as David Pailin narrates, says that when people read the Bible, “the result is ‘that the scripture serves but, like a nose of wax, to be turned and bent, just as may fit the contrary orthodoxies of different societies’.” Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy*.76.

<sup>823</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 21.

<sup>824</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 114.

<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.* 114; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 21.

<sup>826</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:83.

<sup>827</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 114-5.

the prayer of the Prophet Joseph to die as a “*muslim*”<sup>828</sup> and Abraham’s identification of himself as a “*muslim*”<sup>829</sup> do not refer to the established faith of Prophet Muhammad but to their submission to God’s will.

Thus, the verses, “Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam”<sup>830</sup> and “Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter”<sup>831</sup> cannot be interpreted to denote exclusivism and do not apply merely to the institutionalised religion of Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet saw his teachings as another manifestation of the Abrahamic faiths<sup>832</sup> and referred to Islam as “the first and primordial religion, the Islam of all the prophets, of all those who believe in one and the only God, creator and sustainer of all creation”.<sup>833</sup>

Ayoub adds that if the term “*Islam*”, in the verses under discussion, is presumed to refer to the religion established by Prophet Muhammad, two problems will arise. First, all the Qur’anic references to the *islam* of all the divine Prophets who were sent earlier will be incoherent. Second, if the teachings of Prophet Muhammad form the only acceptable religion, then all the Qur’anic verses affirming the “plurality of religion and unity of faith” will be rendered senseless.<sup>834</sup>

It is worth noting that Smith presents the same interpretation of the term “*islam*” used in the Qur’an. He states that “when it is used it can be, and on many grounds almost must be, interpreted not as the name of a religious system but as the designation of a decisive personal act”.<sup>835</sup> Islam, in the eyes of Smith, is not the teaching of Prophet Muhammad; rather, it “is obedience or commitment, the willingness to take on oneself the responsibility of living henceforth according” to God’s will.<sup>836</sup> As we mentioned in the first chapter, Smith distinguished between faith and belief. Such a distinction paved the way for some Muslim pluralists to

---

<sup>828</sup> *The Qur’an*. 12:101.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.* 3:67.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.* 2:19.

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid.* 2:85.

<sup>832</sup> Ayoub, “The Islamic Context.” 18.

<sup>833</sup> Ayoub, “The Need for Harmony.” 10; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 11; Ayoub, “Islam and Christianity: Between.” 33; Ayoub, “The Islamic Tradition.” 342.

<sup>834</sup> Ayoub, “Islam and Pluralism.” 114.

<sup>835</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 110.

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.* 112.

understand a general meaning of *islam*<sup>837</sup> since, as Aydin states, for Smith, “the locus of faith is persons”.<sup>838</sup>

Thus, it seems that Ayoub, as Aydin implicitly states, is inspired by Smith’s distinction between faith and belief. Hence, in his view, the word *islam* in the above-mentioned verses (3:19, 85 and 5:4) refers to the universal submission to God and applies to the human beings as well as whatever is created by God and not to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad only.<sup>839</sup>

### 5.3 Conclusion

In the view of the above explanations, it can be concluded that Ayoub is an Abrahamic pluralist or, as Muhammad Hassan Khalil puts it, one who promotes “limited pluralism”.<sup>840</sup> His pluralism does not accommodate for any religion which is not based on divine revelation. Moreover, his definition of revelation is specific and includes only the Prophets who are mentioned either in the Qur’an or reliable texts.

For Ayoub, revelation is a significant feature in the Islamic perspective. It is indeed an essential pillar and vital foundation for religion. He holds that the legitimacy of every religion depends on its nature and its source. If it stems from God via His inspired Prophets, it is a legitimate religion. Insofar as the teachings of non-revealed religions cannot pertain to God, they consequently cannot be amongst the “true religions”.

God has created man with a pure primordial human nature (*fitrah*). Through the *fitrah*, man can appreciate and attain ultimate Truth. This God-given power, however, can be weakened and cease to function properly. It is incumbent upon God, therefore, to send His Divine Prophets in order to revitalize the lifeless primordial *fitrah*. These Prophets can be classified as either *Ulu al-‘Azm* or non-*Ulu al-‘Azm*. The first group contains those sent by God with a Book (*shari‘ah*). They are Prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The second group contains those

---

<sup>837</sup> Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 344.

<sup>838</sup> Smith, *Towards a World Theology*. 47, Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 344.

<sup>839</sup> Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 345; see also, Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 103-118.

<sup>840</sup> Khalil, *Islam And the Fate of Others*. 139.

who have been responsible for advising people generally without necessarily presenting a new divine Book. Although the collective human memory suffers from not knowing the biographies and history of all the inspired Prophets, there is no great problem regarding the lives and the teachings of the Prophets of Judaism and Christianity.

The religious teachings of Judaism and Christianity show much common ground with Islam. At the same time, in spite of these essential commonalities, their teachings sometimes differ. These can be classified into two groups: contradictory teachings and non-contradictory teachings. The contradictory teachings evidently stem from human alteration since God never conveys two contradictory doctrines to humans. This problem should be solved through dialogue.

In the realm of non-contradictory religious teachings, dissimilarities should be thought of as normal in life. The Qur'an draws a "unique worldview" of the destiny of man and his society. This worldview consists of "a dialectic between diversity and unity". According to the Qur'an, God is one in all degrees, that is, in His essence, His divine attributes, His creation, His lordship and His worship. His creation, therefore, is one and His guidance is one. Although God has sent many infallible Prophets, the spirit of their teachings is one.

At first, human beings were one and should have remained one, but they have since become a "unity in diversity". This diversity, however, resulted neither from lack of prophetic guidance nor from human misunderstanding. Rather the plurality of religions is a natural phenomenon in the life of man that stems from the diversity of his "cultures, languages and races". Man are consequently different, and it is God's will that men should be different. The Qur'an criticizes enmity and conflict among the people of faith not the diversity of religions.

There is no doubt that Judaism and Christianity, due to the infallibility of revelation, were perfect and valid religions in their own times. Nevertheless, the important question to ask concerns their validity after Islam. Does the advent of Prophet Muhammad invalidate them? In reply, it can be said that there are some Qur'anic verses that explicitly substantiate their undiminished validity. According to verses

2:62 and 5:69, which are the most frequently cited verses in the pluralist discourse, salvation has three conditions: 1) belief in God; 2) belief in the hereafter and 3) performance of good deeds. Therefore, Jews, Christians, Sabaeans and all who accept and follow a revealed Book and do good deeds will attain salvation.

It is worth mentioning that while some Qur'anic verses explicitly confirm religious pluralism, other verses, such as "Indeed, with Allah religion is Islam", may incline to the spirit of exclusivism. These verses cannot be opposed to religious pluralism since the term "*islam*" in the Qur'an does not necessarily signify the religion of Prophet Muhammad but also submission to God's will and commands.

Having discussed the views of Ayoub and Javadi in this chapter and the previous ones, I will try to compare and contrast their viewpoints in the following two chapters. In order to discuss their views precisely, I will attempt to address the issue from both rational and Qur'anic perspectives. The next chapter, therefore, will compare their views on the diversity of religions from a rational standpoint.

## **6 Chapter Six: Comparison and Evaluation of the Views of Javadi and Ayoub**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous two chapters separately addressed the perspectives of Javadi and Ayoub on religious diversity. This chapter aims to critically analyse and compare their views and to find out why and how the two thinkers reached different conclusions in their works. It aims to explore the sources and foundations of their differences.

In order to carefully discuss and evaluate the views of both thinkers on the diversity of religions, I will limit this chapter to their rational analysis and leave their different Qur'anic perspectives for the next chapter. This chapter will begin by addressing and comparing the academic and educational backgrounds of Javadi and Ayoub and the milieu in which they lived, which in my understanding were instrumental in their different perspectives and conclusions. At the second step, it will analyse the classification of religions in the eyes of both thinkers. Thirdly, it will turn to the difficult task of defining religion and the position of each of the two thinkers in that regard. The fourth part of the chapter tries to look at the issue of validity or invalidity of non-prophetic religions. Finally, it will attempt to evaluate their analytical arguments regarding the validity of all the revealed religions.

### **6.2 The Academic Life of Javadi and Ayoub**

Considering the lives of Javadi and Ayoub in previous chapters, it was noted that they lived in two starkly different environments, cultures and educational and academic settings. In this chapter, I intend to address some of those elements which were most crucial in the life of Javadi and Ayoub and will try to show how they may have affected their thoughts and approaches.



### 6.2.1 Placing Javadi and Ayoub in their Cultural and Educational Settings

Javadi and Ayoub were born and bred in two very different societies. Javadi was born into a very religious family in Amul (north of Iran). Since old days, Amul was the centre of Tabaristan, the most powerful stronghold of Shi‘ah governments against the Abbasid Caliphs.<sup>841</sup> The whole community in Tabaristan had developed a great sense of identity around Shi‘ism, which they believed to be the most rightful version of Islam. It was a monolithic community without interface with any other faith or denomination. It was in such an environment that Javadi joined one of the religious seminaries in Amul. He continued his religious education there till the age of seventeen.

In contrast, Ayoub was born in Jabal ‘Amil in Lebanon where a large Christian minority lived in the midst of a majority of mainly Shi‘ah Muslim community. Lebanon, in general has been a multi-religious society in which the followers of religions, prompting inter-religious harmony, lived together. As such, Ayoub grew up in a milieu where Muslims and Christians interacted with each other participating together in funerals, weddings, religious events and ceremonies.<sup>842</sup> Thus, from the beginning, Ayoub became familiar with the customs and manners of Christians. When he was five, he joined the “British Presbyterian missionary School”, a move which changed the direction of his life. While his parents thought him the Islamic teachings, the teachers in the school attempted to make him Christian and “they did”.<sup>843</sup> He says, “I was not converted to Christianity, rather I lived it every day, devotionally and culturally, in my school life”. He adds, “I grew up as a Christian at school and a Muslim at home”.<sup>844</sup> His life, therefore, “was kind of influenced by both” his “deep piety and missionary zeal of” his school.<sup>845</sup>

So, right from the beginning the two thinkers were placed in two different settings which laid the main beams of their mental structure in different ways. This difference continued in their further education and late in their academic life. Javadi, in order to complete his Islamic education moved to Tehran and stayed there for five years before going

---

<sup>841</sup> Husein Islami Saravi, *Mazandaran dar Tarikh* (Sariy: Shilfin, 2011). 245-263.

<sup>842</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 97.

<sup>843</sup> Ibid. 97.

<sup>844</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 4.

<sup>845</sup> Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue*. 97.

to Qum. He, therefore, received his religious education in the very closed framework of seminaries of Amul, Tehran and Qum where there was no interface with other faiths even in academic and research capacity. Ayoub, in contrast, received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from the American University of Beirut and moved to USA to complete a Master of Arts in Religious Thought in the University of Pennsylvania. Finally, he acquired a Doctorate in History of Religion from Harvard University. Such stark difference in the education and academic life played a great role in the outlook and approach of the two thinkers. Ayoub himself emphasises that being in multi-religious societies influences the views of scholars in their thought and research. He refers to the differences of opinion of the two prominent and contemporary Shi'ah commentators, Mughniyyah and al-Balaghi. While al-Balaghi produced his commentary in the "narrow framework" of the seminary of Najaf "in the post-Second World War era of political" turmoil of "the Arab World", Mughniyyah wrote his commentary in the multi-religious society of Lebanon.<sup>846</sup>

The Life of Tabataba'i, the most influential teacher and mentor of Javadi, can be another example that shows how the atmosphere can limit or expand the religious thoughts of thinkers. Javadi states that when Tabataba'i produced his *al-Mizan* in Tabriz it was only two volumes. But when he moved to Qum in 1945, he encountered loads of new questions and doubts in the realm of economy, women's rights, politics, materialism and so on to the extent that it dramatically changed the direction of *al-Mizan*. Not only it was expanded to twenty volumes, but also it assumed a more rational, philosophical and social approach.<sup>847</sup> This was less due to the academic atmosphere of Qum than due to the overall climate of Iranian society which was clouded by Communist, Marxist and Existentialist ideas.

A clearer example of how the multi-religious ambience can change religious views of students of religion is John Hick. Hick was an exclusivist for about twenty-five years. He adamantly believed that the followers of other religions cannot be saved. But after moving to Birmingham and paying frequent visits to the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu places of worship he came to the conclusion that they believed in and worshiped

---

<sup>846</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 197.

<sup>847</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 130.

God like Christians. The multi-religious atmosphere of Birmingham changed his mind.<sup>848</sup>

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it should be clear that why the direction of Ayoub and Javadi's works on the issue of diversity of religions are different. First, while Ayoub mostly focuses on the comparative study of Islam and other religions, Javadi does not address it at all, rather he focuses only on Islamic teachings. It may be rightly argued that the Christian upbringing and living in a multi-religious society led Ayoub to move towards such direction. In contrast, the cultural atmosphere of Iran at that time and the monolithic upbringing of Javadi did not encourage and lead him to such direction.

Second, in light of multi-religious milieu of Ayoub, we see some remarkable differences between his works and that of Javadi. Ayoub, due to his previous experiences, reflects upon and evaluates the Christian thoughts through the Christians' own sources not from Islamic texts. He addresses the doctrines of Christianity as they appreciate it. William Montgomery Watt alludes to this reality when he states that Ayoub has a better understanding of Christianity than other Muslim scholars.<sup>849</sup> We, however, see such deficiency in Javadi's works. His concern is not to view Christianity as Christians see and live it. He judges it through his rational yardstick and by the description and the standards that the Qur'an provides him with.

The third distinction of Ayoub is his remarkable contribution to the dialogical science. It is but fair to say that many religious wars and contentions in the past could have been avoided if some meaningful dialogue was established between the rival parties. Meaningful dialogue, like other issues, needs some rules, conditions and presuppositions. Concern with the standards of meaningful dialogue and dialogical approach is to be found thoughtfully in the works of Ayoub. Ayoub, amongst the Muslim thinkers, played an effective role in establishing this significant approach which is partially the result of working in a Muslim-minority society. Ayoub is arguably influenced by those Christian scholars in the West who have worked extensively on religious pluralism and laid down the foundations of meaningful dialogue. He made

---

<sup>848</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 121-2; Hick, *Disputed Questions*. 141. Knitter and Gross had similar story. See, Knitter, *Jesus and the Other Names*. 4-5. Gross, "Excuse Me." 76.

<sup>849</sup> Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. 127.

good use of their writings and adapted them skilfully and compatibly to Islamic thought and principles.

It seems that in this approach, he is inspired, more than everyone else, by his teacher Wilfred Cantwell Smith who made a remarkable contribution, as Richards states, to such an attitude.<sup>850</sup> Smith was one of the greatest historians in the realm of “comparative study of religion” and the proponent of religious pluralism in the present century.<sup>851</sup> He, in the *Meaning and End of Religion*, proposes a new approach to the religious traditions which Hick considers as “a modern classic of religious studies”.<sup>852</sup> His relationship with the followers of other religions led him to shape his thoughts on the issue of diversity of religions and dialogue between faiths.<sup>853</sup> Smith maintained that the peaceful “co-existence, if not a final truth of man's diversity, would seem at least an immediate necessity, and indeed, an immediate virtue”.<sup>854</sup>

In contrast, Javadi, due to living in a Muslim-majority context, does not discuss such approach comprehensively. Javadi's concern was not the question of diversity of faiths but a rational apology for the Islamic faith. Qum, as the academic centre of Shi'ah faith in Iran, experienced two distinctive eras since its establishment, or more accurately, its revival in 1922. From 1922 to 1946 its main focus was on law and jurisprudence. Like Najaf, not only philosophy was not part of its curriculum, but it was regarded as a reprehensible subject. By the arrival of Tabataba'i in 1946 the hostile attitude towards philosophy gradually abated and was eventually replaced by close attention. Ayatollah Huseini Tehrani (1946-1995), a close student of Tabataba'i, quotes him that his main purpose for coming to Qum was to promote philosophical thought to rationally defend Islamic beliefs against Marxists and Materialists. Tehrani quotes him saying, “Today every student enters the gates of Qum with a baggage of questions and confusions. We have to attend to that and

---

<sup>850</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 85.

<sup>851</sup> Livingston, "Religious Pluralism." 58.

<sup>852</sup> Hick, "Foreword." V.

<sup>853</sup> Smith, *The Faith of Other*. 135.

<sup>854</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "The Christian in a Religiously Plural World," in *Christianity and Other Religions : Selected Readings*, ed. John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001). 50.

prepare them for debate against Materialists and teach them the true Islamic philosophy”.<sup>855</sup>

As a student of Tabataba'i, Javadi was motivated by such an aspiration. He did not study philosophy for philosophy, but to defend the tenets of his monotheistic faith. In his philosophical discourses Tabataba'i, as Mutahhari states, explained and expounded the main elements of modern materialistic thought and debunked it mainly with the help of Sadraian philosophy which he called Realist Philosophy.<sup>856</sup> His discourses were later compiled and heavily annotated by Mutahhari which were published in six volumes under the title, *Usul-i Falsafih va Ravish-i Ri'alisim (The philosophical Foundations and Methods of Realism)*.

The soul of Tabataba'i is clearly visible in all Javadi's rational and traditional works. Everywhere he refers to him as 'his eminence the mentor' (*hadrat-i ustad*) and defers to his views and opinions. Even Javadi's interpretive approach to the Qur'an is similar to Tabataba'i.<sup>857</sup> He has tried to concern himself with those topics that have not been taken care of by Tabataba'i in *al-Mizan*.<sup>858</sup> Thus, Javadi had clearly different interests from Ayoub's interests which were inspired by rational apology for the Islamic faith. I now discuss this disparity in interests and motivations in more detail.

### 6.2.2 Differences in Interest and Approach

As we saw, philosophy and rational reasoning are the fascinations of Javadi. Whether it was because of this fascination that he was attracted to his great teacher and mentor Tabataba'i, or he inherited this interest from him remains a question. What is certain is that Tabataba'i's approach, as Javadi states, was rational and philosophical. He did not accept any claim but through a conclusive rational argument. Javadi believes that the rational approach is the Qur'anic approach which orders the believers to make use of

---

<sup>855</sup> Muhammad Huseini Huseini Tehrani, *Mir-i Taban* (Mashhad: Nur-i Malakut-i Qur'an, 2004). 103-6.

<sup>856</sup> Murtada Mutahhari, *Majmu'i-yi Athar*, 30 vols., vol. 6 (Qum: Sadra, 1993). 240.

<sup>857</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 1. 19.

<sup>858</sup> Ibid. 9.

intellectual reasoning in order to prove or disprove any claim.<sup>859</sup> He states that I was more interested in the rational fields of Islamic knowledge than transmitted ones. His *fitrah* and soul mostly coincided with the philosophical issues.<sup>860</sup> He spent most of his life in teaching logic and Islamic philosophy rather than being engaged in other subjects of seminary interest. As such he taught *al-Asfar*, the *magnum opus* of Sadr al-Din in philosophy, three times over which took thirty-five years.<sup>861</sup>

In contrast, Ayoub's approach is mostly historical. This approach can be seen clearly in his *The Crisis of Muslim History*, *Islam Faith and History*, and *Islam Faith and Practice*. He tries to address some of the most important issues which played great roles in the religion of Islam and its consequences in the history. In these books, he addresses "the early history of Islam"<sup>862</sup>, "the formative period of Muslim history"<sup>863</sup>, "the spread of Islam"<sup>864</sup>, "Islam and Muslim society"<sup>865</sup> and "the history of succession of the Prophet Muhammad".<sup>866</sup> In all these, his aim is not a theological defence of religion; rather an attempts to illustrate the historical events, its roots and its consequences in the history.

Moreover, Ayoub mostly engages himself in the comparative study of religion. Comparative approach, as Rodrigues and Harding state, is unavoidable "for any study that includes categories". In this approach, the thinkers attempt to appreciate religious teachings "effectively through comparison, but not" to affirm the superiority of one tradition over the other.<sup>867</sup> There are many common teachings in Islam and Christianity. Ayoub's aim, as he states, is not to "criticize, but to understand" in the light of comparative studies.<sup>868</sup> He, for instance, tries to address comparatively the concepts such as holiness, martyrdom, and redemption in Islam and Christianity. It seems he was inspired in this approach by his teacher, Smith who, as Hick states, was one of the greatest historians in the realm of the "comparative study of religion".<sup>869</sup>

---

<sup>859</sup> Javadi, *Shams al-Wahy-i Tabrizi*. 167-8.

<sup>860</sup> Javadi, *Mir-i Ustad*. 116.

<sup>861</sup> Ibid. 118, 44.

<sup>862</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 8-29.

<sup>863</sup> Ibid. 70-80.

<sup>864</sup> Ibid. 91-108.

<sup>865</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 167-187.

<sup>866</sup> Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam* (Oneworld: Oxford, 2005). 7-133.

<sup>867</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 136.

<sup>868</sup> Ayoub, "A Muslim Appreciation." 73.

<sup>869</sup> John Hick, "Foreword," in *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*, ed. Kenneth Cracknell (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001). viii.

In contrast, Javadi's main concern was to rationally prove the rightfulness of Islamic teachings and to defend its main tenets against the surge of materialistic ideologies in Iran. Even his reference to other faiths must be seen and understood in this context. It is, therefore, natural that Javadi's and Ayoub's methods including their method of interpretation of the Qur'an should be different. That explains why looking at the same verse they arrive at different conclusions. Javadi's interpretative approach is rational and textual while Ayoub's approach is social and historical. We will discuss this in more details in the next chapter where we compare their exegetical interpretations of verse 2:62.

However, despite all their differences, when it comes to classification of religions, it seems that in principle they agree with each other as we discuss below.

### **6.3 Classification of Religions in the Eyes of the Two Thinkers**

As explained in the fourth chapter, theologians present different ways of classifying religions.<sup>870</sup> Javadi, in his first broad categorization, classifies religions into two categories, revealed and non-revealed religions. The founder of a religion is either God or man making for revealed and non-revealed religions, respectively.<sup>871</sup> Ayoub does not explicitly refer to the classification of religions; however, it seems that he, like Javadi, inclines to such a classification. He holds that the foundation of religion is revelation,<sup>872</sup> and that God's messengers were obliged to convey His revelations to mankind.<sup>873</sup> As mentioned in the fifth chapter, these two pieces of evidence prove that Ayoub lays much stress on revelation as the cornerstone of religion, and it shows that he accepts the above classification wholeheartedly.

It is not strange that both Ayoub and Javadi prefer this classification over other classifications. A cursory glance at the nature of non-revealed religions explains why. Weightman states that a non-revealed religion, like Hinduism, "has no founder,

---

<sup>870</sup> Hume, *The World's Living Religions*. 13-7.

<sup>871</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 26. Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 17.

<sup>872</sup> Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life." 19-20.

<sup>873</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

nor is it prophetic". Therefore, the "concept of god is not central to it"<sup>874</sup> and, as such, someone expresses his teachings in the form of a codified book. Moreover, the religion has been expanded in the course of human history and, due to this expansion, there are a great variety of Hinduisms. K.M. Sen similarly states, "Hinduism is more like a tree that has *grown* gradually than like a building that has been *erected* by some great architect at some definite point in time. It contains within it ... the influences of many cultures, and the body of Hindu thought thus offers as much variety as the Indian nation itself".<sup>875</sup> It seems that Tiwari's statement can make clearer the nature of non-revealed religions. He says that almost every religion has two characteristics: a specific person who is asserted to be its originator and a religious text. He adds that Hinduism does not possess these two features. Thus, it can be considered "as a spontaneous growth assisted at various stages of civilisation from various sides rather than a creation or construction of somebody".<sup>876</sup>

As Muslims, Javadi and Ayoub see religion as a foundation the centre of which is God and His message in the boldest sense. Hence, for them, revelation plays a great and determinative role in the structure of religions. In other words, what the founders of religions convey, as Javadi states, are either the products of human thoughts or divine intention.<sup>877</sup> In the revealed religions, the Prophets explicitly declare that they are transferring God's messages; they are not the creations of their intellect or inward mental activities.<sup>878</sup> In contrast, non-revealed religions consist of beliefs, morals and laws which are framed by human beings.<sup>879</sup>

Based on this dual categorization, Küng's triple classification of religions does not seem to be accurate from Ayoub's and Javadi's perspectives. He divides religions according to their founders into the following three types: 1) mystic-centred religions, in which the "main figure" is a mystical figure, as in Hinduism and Buddhism; 2) wisdom-centred religions, in which the main figure is a wise man, as

---

<sup>874</sup> Simon Weightman, "Hinduism," in *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, ed. John R. Hinnells (London: Penguin Books, 1998). 261.

<sup>875</sup> K.M. Sen, *Hinduism* (London/New York: Penguin Books, 1991). 14-5. See also; Kedar Nath Tiwari, *Comparative Religion*, 2 ed. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2014).11.

<sup>876</sup> Tiwari, *Comparative Religion*. 11.

<sup>877</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 429-30.

<sup>878</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 26.

<sup>879</sup> Ibid. 24.



in Confucianism and Daoism and 3) prophet-centred religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>880</sup> Küng believes that the main difference between the prophetic and the mystical religions is in their content. According to him, the fundamental “experience of *prophetic*” religions “is characterized by a strong will to live a condition in which one is gripped by values and responsibilities, a passionate striving for the realization of certain goals and ideals”. On the other hand, a *mystical* religion concerns itself with the “denial of the vital instincts, a renunciation and dissolution of the human, a dedication to infinity”. The prophetic religions, therefore, are “primarily turned outward” and the others inward.<sup>881</sup>

For Javadi and Ayoub, this distinction or classification does not seem to be correct since prophetic religions have great mystical elements embedded in them, too. According to Ayoub, Islam provides all the necessities for human life individually, collectively and spiritually.<sup>882</sup> Ayoub also maintains that “Islam was nourished by the piety, lore, and spirituality of the people of the Book”.<sup>883</sup> Javadi too maintains that religion consists of ethical principles which illustrate the virtues and vices and shows the way to self-purification.<sup>884</sup> For example, he refers to a great mystical figure in Islam, Ali Ibn Muhammad, known as Ibn Turkhi (1368-1431) in *Tahrir Tamhid al-Qawa'id*. Evaluating his highly refined mystical experiences, Javadi judges it to be according to Qur'anic and hadith teachings aiming to show the ways of purification of the soul.<sup>885</sup> Therefore, for both thinkers Islam is mystic and prophet-centred at the same time. According to Islamic narrations, Prophet Jesus, like Prophet Muhammad, lays much stress upon the spiritual life of believers.<sup>886</sup> The spiritual advice of Jesus can be found in many moral and mystical classic texts of Christianity, such as the book of *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A Kempis.

---

<sup>880</sup> Küng, *Tracing the Way*. xiii.

<sup>881</sup> Hans Küng, "A Christian Response," in *Christinaity and the World Religions* (London: SCE Press LTD, 1993). 176-7.

<sup>882</sup> Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life." 21.

<sup>883</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 17; Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 64.

<sup>884</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 27-8.

<sup>885</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tahrir Tamhid al-Qawa'id*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2008). 26.

<sup>886</sup> You can find some of these narrations in English in the Mahdi Muntazir Qa'im, *Jesus through Shi'ite Narrations*, trans. Muhammad Legenhausen (Qum: Ansariyan, 2004).

Thus, it can be concluded that K  ng’s triple classification does not seem to be acceptable to either of the two thinkers. However, it is doubtful if K  ng did not notice the mystical elements in the teachings of prophetic religions. He considers mystics as the figureheads of the mystic-centred religions without denying the mystical teachings of prophet-centred faiths. The whole argument by Ayoub and Javadi depends on their definition of religion, and that is what we need to examine now.

#### 6.4 Definition of Religion According to Ayoub and Javadi

Defining religion is an important issue in the debate over religious diversity. There are many common words that we use every day, but it is very difficult to present an accurate definition for them. The word ‘religion’, as Stanley L. Jaki maintains, is perhaps amongst those common words that denote views that are not only broadly different “but at times mutually exclusive”.<sup>887</sup> Over the years, so many definitions have been framed by Western theologians<sup>888</sup> that even “a partial listing would be impractical”.<sup>889</sup> Smith holds that it is hard to understand what religion is since it does not really correspond to “anything definite or distinctive in the objective world”.<sup>890</sup>

In the eyes of Javadi, religion consists of beliefs, ethics, laws and rules (*shari‘ah*) which inspire and lead man towards salvation.<sup>891</sup> Ayoub does not provide any definition of religion; rather, he mostly aims to discuss the concept and content of religion according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. In the eyes of Ayoub, a religion is a matter of “general principles, moral imperatives, or precepts applicable” to all places and times.<sup>892</sup> He adds that the Prophets were obliged to call the people to “God and to elucidate” His laws for human beings.<sup>893</sup> For Ayoub, religion, therefore,

<sup>887</sup> Stanley L. Jaki, "Science and Religion," in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: The Mackmillan Publishing Company, 1987). 122.

<sup>888</sup> Hume, *The World's Living Religions*. 6-8 ; Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 3-6.

<sup>889</sup> Winston L. King, "Religion," in *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: The Mackmillan Publishing Company, 1987). 283.

<sup>890</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 17.

<sup>891</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 24; Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 22; Javadi, *Shari‘at dar Ayini-yi Ma‘rifat*. 111. Javadi, *Tasnim*, 1. 494-5; *ibid.*, 7. 105; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 430,428; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu‘i*, 12. 145.

<sup>892</sup> Ayoub, "The Qur‘an in Muslim Life." 19-20.

<sup>893</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

is a collection of beliefs, ethics and laws that can lead its followers to salvation. He maintains that whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment and fulfils righteous deeds can be saved.<sup>894</sup> As we see, both thinkers, due to the weaknesses of these substantive and functional definitions of religion, attempt to propose a combined definition for it.

According to Javadi, the diverse definitions presented for religion have more differences than similarities and, as such, they suffer from lack of thematic consistency and harmony.<sup>895</sup> The diversity in the definitions of religion results from two main factors. First, it is, as Taliaferro states, mostly due to the “vast difference between the traditions that are commonly categorized as religions”.<sup>896</sup> He holds that there are “many different strands” in living religions, sometimes intensely “at odds with one another”.<sup>897</sup>

It is indeed clear that there are many similarities and dissimilarities in terms of beliefs and practices amongst the world religions. Kedar Nath Tiwari, in his scientific study of religions, attempts to highlight these similarities and differences. He says that, except for some religions such as Buddhism and Jainism which do not believe in God’s existence in any form, and “a part of Hinduism, which is either atheistic or non-theistic,” all the world’s religions are for the most part monotheistic in nature.

Monotheism is what Javadi regards as the quintessential element of the Islamic faith and, by extension, of all revealed religions. He regards this element to be the pearl and all other tenets of faith to be a protecting shell.<sup>898</sup> In his *Din Shinasi*, he summarises his views on monotheism with a quote from Tabataba’i as follows,<sup>899</sup>

All different principles of religion, including the tenets of faith, virtuous human conduct, practical rulings (devotional acts, interactions, politics and authorities), also description of the system of creation (like the Throne (‘*arsh*), the Footstool (*kursi*), the Tablet, the Pen, the heavens and the earth, the angels, the jinn, the devils, the plants, the animals and the human,

---

<sup>894</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21.

<sup>895</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 25.

<sup>896</sup> Charles Taliaferro, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998). 21

<sup>897</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>898</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 61.

<sup>899</sup> Ibid. 63.

the beginning and the end of creation and its qualities, all rely on one single principle called monotheism.<sup>900</sup>

The monotheistic character is deeply emphasized in Islam, Sikhism and Judaism. The monotheistic character of Zoroastrianism and Christianity may be doubted.<sup>901</sup> There is a vast diversity in Hinduism, so much so that it is difficult to use the term Hinduism as an “umbrella category to designate a host of interconnected ideas and traditions”.<sup>902</sup> Due to this vast diversity, it has been named the religion of “330 million gods”.<sup>903</sup> Christian missionaries who went to India in the nineteenth century were inclined to consider Hindus as idolatrous.<sup>904</sup> Moreover, Hillary Rodrigues highlights the dissimilarities amongst the world religions. He argues that even the quality and value of religious rulings and beliefs are different. He contends that, while some traditions emphasize an unquestioning conviction grounded in a specific series of teachings, in other religions, “a healthy scepticism” about religions is considered an essential “element of being truly religious”. He adds, “even within the same tradition, one person’s most deeply held religious” beliefs may be considered as the culmination of delusion by another.<sup>905</sup> David A. Pailin, having mentioned the major characteristics of religion, believes that religion “is a complex entity for which there is no simple definition, nor has any single essence which identifies it”. He, due to these complicated features, concludes that the boundaries of religion “are ‘fuzzy’”.<sup>906</sup> Hick also holds that since “many different phenomena” are subsumed under the umbrella of religion, it is very difficult to propose a comprehensive definition that covers all the religious aspects of religions. Therefore, due to the vast differences, it is difficult to draw an acceptable definition. However, he believes that

---

<sup>900</sup> Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 10 (Qum, 1966). 134-5.

<sup>901</sup> Tiwari, *Comparative Religion*. 237-8; Alister E McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). 138. See also; Satishchandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 3 ed. (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1948). 72-3; Friedhelm Hardy, "Introduction," in *The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia* (London: Routledge, 1990). 6-7.

<sup>902</sup> Taliaferro, *Contemporary philosophy*. 18. See also; Friedhelm Hardy, "The Classical Religions of India," in *The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia* (London: Routledge, 1990). 41-2, 37; Hardy, "Introduction." 8; Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 43, 45.

<sup>903</sup> Taliaferro, *Contemporary philosophy*. 19.

<sup>904</sup> Ninian Smart, "Hinduism," in *A companion to Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Charles Taliaferro and Philip L. Quinn (Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999). 10.

<sup>905</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 2

<sup>906</sup> Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy*. 11-21.

the resemblances and differences between these definitions look like the similarities and differences “appearing within a family”.<sup>907</sup>

In the light of what has been presented above, it is not surprising that the enormous differences within the religious traditions have led some scholars to believe in the impossibility of any definition for religion.

According to Alister E McGrath, the widely different definitions of religion stems from the prejudice, particular aims, beliefs and schools of thought of the theologians providing the definitions. Therefore, if someone is like F. Max Muller, who believes that all religions lead men towards divine reality, he will frame a definition of religion that embodies this notion. Muller, as McGrath states, defines religion as “a disposition which enables men to apprehend the Infinite under different names and disguises”.<sup>908</sup> Hamilton presents a similar position when he argues that the definitions “are not always free from the influence of theoretical predilections” and the aims of theologians. That is to say, they always attempt to define religion in a way that ratifies “their theological interpretation of it”.<sup>909</sup> In other words, it is clear that if we want to approach religions from different angles, such as emotional, individual, social and ritual points of view, proposing a comprehensive definition would be difficult. Therefore, as Rodrigues and Harding state, agreement on “a definition that is sufficiently encompassing” of people’s broad range of religious inclinations is challenging for theologians.<sup>910</sup> There seems to be yet another reason that can hinder the provision of a definition of religion. Since religions are usually very “inclusive and complex”,<sup>911</sup> and mentioning all the relevant characteristics in a definition is difficult, as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi claims<sup>912</sup>, reaching an agreement over a uniform definition of religion is difficult. It seems that Taliaferro has the same point in mind when he states that “any general description” of these different and inconsistent religions should be presented in broadly general terms. Moreover,

---

<sup>907</sup> Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*. 2.

<sup>908</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 408.

<sup>909</sup> Hamilton, *The Sociology*. 13.

<sup>910</sup> Rodrigues and Harding, *Introduction to the Study*. 2.

<sup>911</sup> Hume, *The World's Living Religions*. 4.

<sup>912</sup> Al-Tusi, *Asas al-Iqtibas*. 441-2.

understanding these matters is “far more complex than these terms and categories”.<sup>913</sup>

However, Ayoub and Javadi are not concerned with such technical difficulties and, as we saw in the above, they try to give a definition for what they call the revealed religions, rather than an umbrella definition for all the traditions which are usually classified as religion. Javadi, moreover, criticises the ‘Western definition’ of religion and believes that it is focused towards religion as a personal experience rather than religion as a revealed system of faith.

### 6.5 Critique of Javadi of ‘Western Definitions’

As it has been mentioned above Javadi does not focus on the comparative study of religion and rarely refers to Western’s books on this matter. However, in *Din Shinasi*, he refers to three ‘Western scholars’ and criticises their definitions of religion. He refers to Tylor, who defines religion as “belief in Spiritual Beings”;<sup>914</sup> Schleiermacher, for whom “the essence of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence”;<sup>915</sup> and James Martineau, who contends “religion is the belief in an ever living God, that is, in the Divine Mind and Will ruling the Universe and holding moral relations with mankind”.<sup>916</sup>

Javadi does not refer to the basis and the weakness of these definitions. It seems that Javadi’s main criticism of the above definitions is that they attempt to define religion based on religious experience. Smith clearly describes the foundation of these definitions as the inner experience of individuals. It is a “personal confrontation with the splendour and the love of God”<sup>917</sup>; it is “man’s personal sense of the holy”.<sup>918</sup> Faith, in other words, describes “the inner, existential, and experimental” aspect of religion.<sup>919</sup> He describes faith as having two features; it is varied, and it is not observable by others. I, therefore, cannot see my friend’s faith; rather, I can see its

---

<sup>913</sup> Taliaferro, *Contemporary philosophy*. 14.

<sup>914</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 1. 383.

<sup>915</sup> Hume, *The World's Living Religions*. 7

<sup>916</sup> Alston, "Religion." 140

<sup>917</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 29.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>919</sup> Hughes, *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology*. 10.

“expressions”.<sup>920</sup> Smith, in order to show how faith has varied expressions, likens it to love. Love can be manifested in words - you are my beloved – and also in a wide range of “behaviour, from holding the hand to composing a symphony”. He adds, “yet love itself, is behind its expressions”.<sup>921</sup> He states, “there is no ideal faith”. It has varied in the course of centuries and will continue to vary.<sup>922</sup> In short, faith “is a living relation to the transcendent, and cumulative traditions are the constantly changing human conceptualizations of faith”.<sup>923</sup>

Javadi criticises such definitions because, in his view, they mix up religiosity (*tadayyun*) and faith (*iman*) with religion (*din*). Religiosity and faith can be used as attributes of a person while religion, in essence, is a message that is conveyed by God through His Prophets.<sup>924</sup> For Javadi, therefore, religion is not a belief or feeling or experience, but Divine teachings and messages which God has sent via His Messengers to mankind.

Referring to certain types of religious experience from the book of *Reason and Religious Belief*<sup>925</sup>, Javadi maintains that defining religion as religious experience conflicts with Islamic teachings and the concept of revelation (*vahy*). He holds that the Prophets are rendered immune in the stages of receiving and conveying God’s message, unlike religious experience which is highly subjective and vulnerable to error and confusion. Referring to the verse “Indeed you receive the Qur’an from (*ladun*) One who is all-wise, all-knowing”<sup>926</sup> he states that the term *ladun* (from God’s quarter) denotes that the Prophet was absolutely aware that he was receiving the messages from God. There is no room for doubt here. Moreover, referring to the verses “nor does he speak out of (his own) desire: it is just a revelation that is

---

<sup>920</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 171.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid. 185-6.

<sup>922</sup> Ibid. 192.

<sup>923</sup> Ward, "Religion and the Question." 12-3.

<sup>924</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 26-7.

<sup>925</sup> They are a- “*Experience of God*” mediated via a common “*sensory object*” like seeing Him in “an icon”. b- “*Experience of God*” mediated via an unusual “*sensory object*” like seeing Him “in a bush that burned but was not consumed”. c- “*Experience of God*” mediated via a “normal sensory language” like seeing His in a dream. d- “*Experience of God*” mediated through the normal indescribable “*sensory language*”. e- “*Experience of God*” that is “*not mediated by any sensory object*” like someone be aware of God immediately and intuitively. Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 82-3. See also; Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 244.

<sup>926</sup> *The Qur’an*. 27:6.

revealed to him”<sup>927</sup>, Javadi states that the Prophet is infallible in the realm of conveying the messages, too. In other words, he conveyed the messages intact as he received them intact.<sup>928</sup>

Ayoub does not refer to Tylor, Martineau and Schleiermacher’s definitions. However, these definitions clearly do not conform with his perspective. He states that the angel repeatedly met the Prophet, often in the form of a human being, and “transmitted the words that came to constitute the verses” and chapters of the Qur’an.<sup>929</sup> He adds that the words that the Prophet conveyed to the Muslims “were not his own, but were revealed to him by God”.<sup>930</sup> As we see, Ayoub refers to the term “words”. He states that the “Qur’an is the word of God”.<sup>931</sup> It means that God sent His messages in the form of words via revelation. He clearly uses the expression “sent down” and states that it “was sent down in part” in the “night of termination” to the Prophet.<sup>932</sup> It implies that the Prophet’s function was only to receive God’s messages in the form of words. For Ayoub, therefore, revelation is not a religious experience in which the Prophet had an encounter with God after which he interpreted and explained what he comprehended in his own words.

To sum up, it is clearly evident that neither Ayoub nor Javadi attempted to provide an umbrella definition for religion. They are more concerned with a definition of religion which can functionally and substantially define Islam or, at the most, the revealed religions. This shows that they do not believe in the validity of all religions. The main question, however, is by what criteria Ayoub and Javadi judge the validity of a faith. To answer this question, we have to discuss the non-revealed and revealed religions in turn.

---

<sup>927</sup> Ibid. 53:3-4.

<sup>928</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 242-3. See also; Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. 65.

<sup>929</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 40.

<sup>930</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>931</sup> Ayoub, "The Qur’an in Muslim Life." 19.

<sup>932</sup> Ibid. 19.



## 6.6 The Problem of the Validity of Non-Revealed Religions

The non-revealed religions, according to Javadi, are manmade religions.<sup>933</sup> Their teachings do not originate from the divine source, but rather are the products of their founders' reflections. Javadi and Ayoub both try to prove the invalidity of non-revealed religions in their own ways.

Ayoub clearly claims that a true religion, according to the Qur'an, is a religion which "is based only on the revelation" of God.<sup>934</sup> This means that those traditions which are not rooted in revelation cannot be classified as true religions. He asserts that the "ultimate legitimacy" of Judaism and Christianity is based on revelation.<sup>935</sup> A "true religion is a faith in the revealer, God, and in His revelation".<sup>936</sup> He maintains that man can attain salvation only through "prophetic guidance".<sup>937</sup> According to the verse, "Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve,"<sup>938</sup> Ayoub holds that the revelation or divine Book is one of the criteria by which the authenticity of a "genuine religion" can be verified.<sup>939</sup>

Javadi, however, addresses the invalidity of non-revealed religions from a rational approach. Muslim theologians address the issue of invalidity in a specific chapter classified under the heading of "the necessity of prophethood". Javadi, following the great Muslim philosopher Avicenna,<sup>940</sup> tries to elaborate on the invalidity of non-revealed religions under the same heading. Humankind, he argues, is a social being and every society needs laws in order to be conducted beneficially. Man, due to his irresistible instinct for self-preservation, always attempts to take care of his own benefit. Consequently, he cannot be a good legislator for his society. This implies that the non-revealed religions cannot be reliable and valid. God is, therefore,

---

<sup>933</sup> Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 24.

<sup>934</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23.

<sup>935</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 52.

<sup>936</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 39.

<sup>937</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 63. See also; Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>938</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:62.

<sup>939</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 34.

<sup>940</sup> Sina, *al-Najat*. 708-9. Sina, *al-Shifa*. 441-2; Javadi clarifies Avicenna's standpoint on the necessity of prophecy in a short essay. See, Javadi, *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishi*, 4. 218-238.

naturally obliged to send His infallible rules and laws to man.<sup>941</sup> Obviously, this approach is based on the definition of religion as a set of laws and legislations for social conduct.

The two distinct approaches assumed by Ayoub and Javadi have been well known to Muslim theologians since old days. For example, the well-known Shi'ah theologian and jurist Fadil Ibn 'Abdullah al-Suyuri, known as al-Fadil al-Miqdad (d. 1423), states that there are two methods for proving the necessity of prophecy, the method of philosophers (*falasifah*) and the method of theologians (*mutakallimin*). The first method is based on the intellectual reasoning in what is reported from Avicenna. The second method is based on the principle of grace (*lutf*).<sup>942</sup> The principle of grace means that God created man in order to lead him toward spiritual perfection. He cannot attain such perfection through his own 'aql and *fitrah*. So, he needs God's grace in form of divine guidance delivered by His Prophets.<sup>943</sup>

In the light of what has been said, it can be clear why the two thinkers address the invalidity of non-revealed religions in their own different ways. Javadi, due to his philosophical background, mostly tries to address their invalidity using a rational approach. In other words, he tries to philosophize it.<sup>944</sup> Ayoub, due to his Qur'anic

<sup>941</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 3.19-22; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Vahy va Nubuvvat* (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010). 28-36; Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 41-2; Javadi, *Qur'an-i Karim az Manzar*. 184-5; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 387; Javadi, *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishih*, 2. 372.

<sup>942</sup> al-Fadil Al-Miqdad, *al-Lawami' al-Ilahiyyah fi al-Mabahith al-Kalamiyyah* (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 2007). 231-2.

<sup>943</sup> Ja'far Sobhani, *Manshur-i Jawid*, 12 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1994). 19. See also; Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 53; Hasan Al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh al-Tajrid al-I'tiqad* (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1996). 154.

<sup>944</sup> Such rational approach is found among Christian thinkers in the past, too. Saint Thomas Aquinas (1224/6-1274), for instance, stated that "philosophical science" is not sufficient for salvation and men have always been in need of Scriptures, which Saint Paul believed, were revealed by God. For Aquinas, the divine teachings are not a "part of philosophical science discovered" by men's reason. In other words, it was "necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God, besides the philosophical science investigated by human reason". For Aquinas, revelation is necessary since man cannot achieve some of the most significant "theological truths" by his reason. Étienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (New York: New American Library, 1963). 22-3; Barbour, *Religion and Science*. 7. Aquinas explains that God has directed man to an aim that is beyond his intellect. If man wants to deprive himself of the divine guidance and confine himself to the philosophical science, he will not attain salvation. He adds that if God deprived man of His divine teachings, the truth about Him, discerned through intellect, would be grasped only by a few "after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors". This would mean that just a small number of men would attain salvation. Gilson, *Elements of Christian*. 23-5. The Catholic Church also states that, even if mankind "had been created in a state of pure nature", divine revelation would still be vital and necessary for mankind since man has always had problems achieving the

approach tries to address it in light of Qur'anic verses, that is, through the principle of *lutf*. Ayoub indirectly refers to this principle and states that it is "incumbent upon God" to send His Prophets in order to warn man "against heedlessness and disobedience".<sup>945</sup> He alludes to the principle of *lutf* when he states that *fitrah*, as an inner guide, can show the Truth, but it can be weakened by obeying the "carnal soul",<sup>946</sup> hence, God should send His Prophets to reform their *fitrah*.

It is worth mention that, the principle of *lutf*, as Ayoub presented for the invalidity of non-revealed religions, is absolutely faith-based and may not be acceptable as an independent criterion for the followers of non-revealed religions. However, Javadi's argument for the invalidity of non-revealed religions can be an independent criterion since he establishes his arguments on analytic not Qur'anic principles.

At any rate, despite their differences in method, both Javadi and Ayoub prove the invalidity of non-revealed religions although they do not completely reject such religions as totally untruthful. We now have to see what differences they have regarding the revealed religions and to what extent they accept their validity.

## 6.7 The Two Thinkers and the Validity of Revealed Religions

Both thinkers, based on a hadith from Prophet Muhammad, accept that God has sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets in order to guide mankind.<sup>947</sup> These prophets can be classified into two groups, *Ulu al- 'Azm* and non-*Ulu al- 'Azm*.<sup>948</sup> The *Ulu al- 'Azm* are those upon whom God bestowed divine Books.<sup>949</sup> They are,

---

truths. Richard A. Gard, *Catholicism* (New York: Gorge Braziller, 1962). 54; see also; 17,21. The intellectual proof of the necessity of revelation can be found in Wainwright's words, too. He says that the truths that were derived from philosophy are "fragmented and mixed with error". Due to the fallacy of intellect, he concludes that "only in scripture can truth be found whole and undistorted". He adds that the revelation is surer and safer than philosophy as a guide to reality. Wainwright, "Christianity." 61. See also; Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*. 123; 128-9. Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy*. 15-6.

<sup>945</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 31.

<sup>946</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 22. See also; Ayoub, "The Word of God and the Voices." 62.

<sup>947</sup> Al-Saduq, *al-I'tiqadat*. 92-3; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, 11. 30, 58, 32, 28.

<sup>948</sup> It seems that some scholars go further in assessing the Prophets' features. See, Wach, *Sociology*. 346-351.

<sup>949</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 110; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 6. 251.

according to the Qur'an<sup>950</sup> and hadiths, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.<sup>951</sup> The contents of these Books, in the eyes of the two thinkers, can be divided mainly into two categories: religious beliefs and religious rulings.<sup>952</sup> We first consider their views on religious beliefs followed by their discussion of religious rulings.

### 6.7.1 Religious Beliefs

Both Javadi and Ayoub highlight the similarity of the fundamental religious beliefs in the revealed religions. Ayoub states that, from the beginning, Prophet Muhammad considered his teachings as an "expression of the Abrahamic" religion. He, therefore, delivered his message to be consistent with the previous Books. For Ayoub, there is "an essential unity" in the revealed Books, in which the Qur'an sees the Old and New Testaments as "sources of guidance and light".<sup>953</sup> The Qur'an thus regards itself not as "contradicting or replacing" the previous Books but as "confirming" them.<sup>954</sup> God created all humanity, and He is "a God of love who" desires "the salvation of all" humankind.<sup>955</sup> The "ultimate power" comes from Him.<sup>956</sup> Ayoub concludes that Islam and Christianity have many common principles.<sup>957</sup>

Javadi, similarly, as was explained in detail in the fourth chapter, asserts that, in terms of religious beliefs, there is no single difference between the revealed religions.<sup>958</sup> The principles and foundations of all these religions are the same. He adds that Prophet Muhammad did not pose any new principle or notion, but rather clarified the previous religious beliefs presented by the preceding Prophets.<sup>959</sup> To Javadi, although the Prophets were sent for the guidance of man in the course of long history at different times and in various places, the religious beliefs presented by

---

<sup>950</sup> *The Qur'an*, 42:13.

<sup>951</sup> Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 2. 17; Al-Majlisi, *Bihar*, 11. 32, 56; Al-Saduq, *al-I'tiqadat*. 149.

<sup>952</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 27; Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 26; Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life." 19-20.

<sup>953</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18-20.

<sup>954</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>955</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 45.

<sup>956</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 32.

<sup>957</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21.

<sup>958</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 526 and 533.

<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. 195. Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 194, 189, 71; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 544.

them are in concordance with each other.<sup>960</sup> According to Javadi, the plurality of religious beliefs amongst the revealed religions is rationally and traditionally unfeasible.

Ayoub and Javadi hold that the religious beliefs are rooted in the *fitrah* of mankind, and that is why if they deviate from *fitrah*, they lose their effectiveness. Moreover, they cannot change in the course of time since *fitrah* is unchangeable. *Fitrah* means that man perceives guidance from the depth of his soul, which can lead him towards the Truth. Ayoub, in view of the hadith “every child is born in the (state) of the *fitrah* and then his parents make him into a Jew or a Christian”, maintains that this guidance is in accordance with the basic Qur’anic rules.<sup>961</sup> God created man “with a primitive but wholesome knowledge of Allah”. The Prophets were obliged to inform man via revelation to “realize and live the full implications of this knowledge”.<sup>962</sup> For him the awareness of the unity of God is part of the knowledge that Allah bestowed upon man.<sup>963</sup> Javadi similarly asserts that the notion of *fitrah* was rooted clearly in the Qur’an and in authentic narratives. Accordingly, it means that prophetic guidance is in accordance with the *fitrah* of man.<sup>964</sup> He justifies the unity and conformity of the religious beliefs of the divine Prophets through *the fitrah*. He establishes his argument on two premises: 1) the religious beliefs confirm the *fitrah* of human beings and 2) the *fitrah* of man cannot be subjected to alteration in the course of man’s history. Hence, the religious beliefs of all prophets, established and based on unchangeable *fitrah*, are the same.<sup>965</sup> Therefore, the reason for the immutability of religious beliefs from Moses to Muhammad is the immutability of the *fitrah* of people.

It is worth mentioning in this regard that many Muslim theologians, in order to prove the existence of God, resort to the argument of *fitrah*. They state that, in crises, especially when there is no hope for help, man feels that there is a supernatural

---

<sup>960</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5.526-7.

<sup>961</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 13; Ayoub, "Dhimmah in the Qur'an." 104-5.

<sup>962</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 62.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid. 25; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 55; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

<sup>964</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 71-3.

<sup>965</sup> Ibid. 145. See also; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 94; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 9. 592; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13.450-5; *ibid.*, 17. 123-6; Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashari*. 178; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 415; Javadi, *Islam va Muhi-i Zist*. 310.

power<sup>966</sup> which can help him. They, referring to some Qur'anic verses,<sup>967</sup> believe that everybody, believer or non-believer, in a critical situation and overcome by despair, tends towards God.<sup>968</sup> Sadr al-Din, for example, states that the belief in God and His attributes is an intrinsic issue. People look for God in dangerous situations even though they are not aware of such an intrinsic inclination.<sup>969</sup> This shows that belief in God stems from the depth of man's heart and soul.<sup>970</sup>

It must be noted, however, that all those who have argued based on *fitrah* have not been able to prove anything more than an intrinsic awareness of God in human beings. Thus, all argument from *fitrah* cannot prove the immutability of all religious beliefs in detail. As far as I am aware, Muslim theologians, in order to prove religious beliefs beyond the existence of God, have not referred to the argument of *fitrah*. For instance, the unity of God has several dimensions, such as "Oneness of the Essence" (*tawhid-i dhati*), "Oneness of the Attributes", (*tawhid-i sifati*), "Oneness of Creatorship" (*tawhid-i khaliqiyyat*), "Oneness of Lordship" (*tawhid-i rububi*) and "Oneness of Worship" (*tawhid-i ibadi*).<sup>971</sup> They have not proven these details by

<sup>966</sup> The term supernatural, as Rodney Stark states, is much wider than god. He defines the supernatural "as forces or entities, conscious or otherwise, that are beyond or outside nature and that can suspend, alter, or ignore physical forces". Rodney Stark, "Economics of Religion," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Robert A. Segal (Oxford/malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006). 50.

<sup>967</sup> See, *The Qur'an*. 6:40-1; 29:65.

<sup>968</sup> Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 12 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996). 272; Ja'far Sobhani, *Manshur-i Jawid*, 12 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2004). 39-40. See also; Mahmud Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshaf*, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Egypt: Mustafa al-Bani, 1966). 222.

<sup>969</sup> Sadr al-Din, *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*. 23-4.

<sup>970</sup> Christian theologians have also produced the same literature regarding human instinctive knowledge of God. John Damascene, a famous Greek scholar, as Etienne Gilson states, holds that "the knowledge that God exists is naturally implanted" in all mankind. Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955). 91. The existence of God in the Old and New Testaments, as Henry C. Thiessen states, is considered as self-evident. He holds that since God's existence is clear, the Bible does not attempt to verify his existence. Referring to some verses, he holds that God's existence "is taken for granted" throughout the Scriptures. Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Michigan: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979). 27. Based on the verse "For from the creation of the world the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made," Christopher Stead holds that, in the eyes of Paul, "the mystery of God's being is accessible to human minds" and even "pagans can know that God exists". Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). 115-6. In the light of what has been said, it can be concluded that the existence of God is self-evident. See also; Alister E McGrath, *Theology: The Basic Readings* (Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008). 14.

<sup>971</sup> Ja'far Sobhani, *al-Ilahiyyat ila Huda al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah wa al-'Aql*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2009). 79-348; Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 18-48.

resorting to the argument of *fitrah*.<sup>972</sup> The necessity of prophecy<sup>973</sup>, the infallibility of Prophets<sup>974</sup> and the like are among those beliefs which, in the eyes of Muslim theologians, are beyond the scope of *fitrah*.

If all or at least the majority of religious beliefs were rooted in human's *fitrah*, as both thinkers hold, Muslim theologians, in order to prove them, would have referred to *fitrah*. In fact, al-Shaykh al-Tusi, one of the greatest Shi'ah authorities in theology, hadith and law, has explicitly mentioned in his commentary, *al-Tibyan*, that verse 27:24 implies that the tenets of faith are not instinctively obvious.<sup>975</sup> Therefore, the immutability of religious beliefs from Moses to Muhammad cannot be proven by the immutability of the *fitrah* of people.

Al-Tusi and other Shi'ah theologians maintain that religious beliefs should be provable via decisive intellectual judgment.<sup>976</sup> This means that nobody can rely on presumption, single individual narrations (*khabar-i vahid*) or following an expert (*mujtahid*). Sobhani, for instance, says that "the aim of right belief is knowledge and certainty; naturally, it is only decisive self-evident knowledge (*hujja*) that can lead the way to this certainty. Thus, it is incumbent on every Muslim to attain certainty in his beliefs on his own account; he cannot simply resort to the imitation (*taqlid*) of others in this realm".<sup>977</sup> Resorting to reason, therefore, is one of the distinctive features of Muslim theologians for proving the religious beliefs.

<sup>972</sup> See; Hasan Al-Hilli, *Wajib al-I'tiqad 'ala Jami' al-'Ibad* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1995). Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, *Majmu'iy-i Rasa'il-i Khajjah Nasir-i Tusi* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1984). 475-6; Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, *Risalah al-Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id* (Beirut: Dar al-Ghurbah, 1992). 51-2; al-Fadil Al-Miqdad, *al-I'timad fi Sharh Wajib al-I'tiqad* (Mashhad: Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah, 1991). 65-7; Ja'far Al-Hilli, *al-Masalik fi Usul al-Din* (Mashhad: Markaz al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah, 1993). 43-51.

<sup>973</sup> See; Al-Miqdad, *al-I'timad*. 83; Al-Miqdad, *Al-Lawami'*. 241-2; Al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad*. 154; al-Sayyid Al-Murtada, *al-Dhakhirah fi 'Ilm al-Kalam* (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1990). 323-6; Hasan Al-Hilli, *al-Bab al-Hadi 'Ashar* (Mashhad: Astan-i Quds-i Razavi, 1991). 34-5.

<sup>974</sup> See; Al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad*. 155-7. Al-Miqdad, *al-I'timad*. 83; 'Abad al-Razzaq Lahiji, *Guhar-i Murad* (Qum: Nashr-i Sayih, n.d). 379.

<sup>975</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 10 vols., vol. 8 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988). 89.

<sup>976</sup> Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Iqtisad fima Yata'allq bi al-I'tiqad* (Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, n.d). 25-8; Al-Miqdad, *al-I'timad*. 48-50; Ibrahim Ibn Nubakht, *al-Yaqut fi 'Ilm al-Kalam* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1992). 27-9; Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, *al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad* (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d). 11; Muhammad Al-Mufid, *al-Mughni'ah* (Qum: Daftar-i Tablighat-i Islami, 1989). 29.

<sup>977</sup> Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 3.

Moreover, the Qur'anic perspective regarding religious beliefs is based on intellectual analysis too.<sup>978</sup> It does not consider most of religious beliefs as self-evident or any of them as mysterious chimera or intellectual puzzles. The belief in the demonstrability of religious beliefs leads Richards to claim that religion should not be “so esoteric and noumenal” to “be the concern of devotees alone”; otherwise, “objective study of the religion would be out of the question”.<sup>979</sup> This means that religious beliefs should be understandable and demonstrable via reason. If every religion wants to prove its beliefs to the followers of other religions only through its sacred Books, it is very difficult to find a solution to adjudicate the truth claims of religions.

Needless to say, there is a clear distinction between the *fitrah* and intellectual argument. The *fitrah* means that man can attain the reality without reasoning or prior teaching, while in an intellectual argument, we realise a fact through reasoning and argument. However, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi fell into error and considered intellectual argument as *fitrah*.<sup>980</sup>

However, it should be noted that the religious beliefs which were presented by the Qur'an and hadiths, as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi states, can be divided into two groups: 1) beyond the scope of *'aql* and 2) demonstrable via *'aql*.<sup>981</sup> The first group of religious beliefs which relate to the *'alam al-ghayb* (the unseen world), such as the quality of paradise and its blessings, cannot be proven by intellectual reasoning. This group, which comprises of a small proportion of the entire religious beliefs, should be demonstrated via authentic narrations. The second group are those which can be proven via reasoning, such as the existence of God and His attributes.<sup>982</sup>

---

<sup>978</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>979</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 6.

<sup>980</sup> Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, 32 vols., vol. 19 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999). 71; *ibid.*, 1. 165.

<sup>981</sup> Al-Tusi, *Talkhis al-Muhassal*. 67-8.

<sup>982</sup> One of the most commonly used arguments for the existence of God is the teleological argument, which is sometimes also known as “the argument from design”. John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*, 4 ed. (New York/London: Routledge, 1977). 216. The Qur'an referring to some signs of God in the verse 2:164, as some Muslim thinkers hold, states that the harmony of this order is evidence for His existence. Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, 32 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999). 152-174; Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996). 398-405. Avicenna, referring to the verse 41:53, maintains that this verse prove the existence of God via the argument of



This view reverberates in Javadi's writings. He admits that not all religious beliefs are rationally demonstrable. Quoting Tomas Aquinas, he divides religious propositions into three types; rational, irrational and arational. Rational propositions are those which are confirmed by both reason and faith. Arational propositions are those which cannot be positively or negatively governed by the judgement of reason. These propositions are those tenets of faith about which reason is silent and cannot be disproved by it. Irrational propositions are those which reason rejects. These propositions cannot be part of faith.<sup>983</sup> This is what Javadi means by demonstrability.

If we accept, as the Muslim thinkers including Javadi do<sup>984</sup>, that the main religious beliefs derived from the Islamic texts should be provable via intellectual reasoning, it may lead us to find out an argument for the uniformity of the religious beliefs of all Prophets.

This argument is established on two premises. One is that the main religious beliefs are based on intellectual argument and the other that the conclusions of intellectual arguments are comprehensive and universal. Since the first premise was discussed before, we shall address the second one here.

The second premise means that, if a claim has been established by decisive rational judgment, it should be permanent and definitive. The conclusion of such an argument cannot be confined to a specific time or place. There are indisputable laws in nature that have been proven logically by firm evidence in different fields of science. The science of mathematics is one of them. For instance, the summation of  $1+1=2$ ; the summation of three angles in a triangle is 180 degrees. The ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter is as much as the number *pi*. The list can go on. No

---

design. Al-Tusi, *Sharh al-Isharat*, 3. This argument, like other theological arguments, has been criticized by Western scholars. For these critiques see, Hospers, *An Introduction*. 217-222; Wainwright, *Philosophy of Religion*. 51-61; Pailin, *Groundwork of Philosophy*. 164-8; Popkin and Stroll, *Philosophy*. 180-90; Christopher Hamilton, *Understanding Philosophy* (Cheltenham: Nelson Thoenes Ltd, 2003). 232-4; Küng, *Does God Exist?* 531-33. The Muslim thinkers have attempted to answer their criticisms of this argument. See, Javadi, *Tabyin-i Barahin-i Ithbat-i Khuda*. 227-243; Ja'far Sobhani, *Madkhal-i Masa'il-i Jadid dar 'Ilm-i Kalam*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1996). 72-113.

<sup>983</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 123. See also, Etienne Gilson, *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966). 82-3.

<sup>984</sup> 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 8 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 588, 569; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 17. 393; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 312.

mathematician now or in the future could dispute these facts. If these demonstrable laws are permanent, the demonstrable religious beliefs should be permanent as well.

In the light of what has been mentioned above, it may be concluded that the reason for the uniformity of religious beliefs of the revealed religions, cannot be based merely on the unity of *fitrah* of human beings as Ayoub and Javadi claim. In other words, it is difficult to absolutely claim that since man from the beginning has possessed an immutable *fitrah*, religious beliefs, which were established according to unalterable *fitrah*, are unchangeable. To put it differently, the perpetuity of human beings' *fitrah* cannot prove the unity of all tenets of the revealed religion.

Our discussion till now concerned the tenets of religions and the arguments for their uniformity or difference. However, those arguments cannot be applied to religious precepts which are based on convention rather than reality. Ayoub and Javadi have quite different opinions in this regard which we now turn to discuss.

### **6.7.2 Religions Practices**

The religious teachings of the revealed Prophets, as has been argued before, can be classified into two types: religious beliefs and religious practices. As was noted Ayoub and Javadi rejected the plurality of the religious beliefs of revealed religions based on the presumed uniformity of human *fitrah*. But what about religious rulings? Can the same judgment apply to them as well? In order to discuss the question of their validity, two issues must be clarified at the outset. First, the extent of similarities and dissimilarities of religious practices in the revealed religions should be assessed. Second, the rationale for the similarities and differences, in the eyes of our two thinkers must be examined.

Religious rulings can be classified into two categories, namely, those which concern the acts of worship (*'ibadat*) such as prayer and pilgrimage, and those that are related to social interactions (*mu'amalat*) such as financial transactions. There are two important differences between *'ibadat* and *mu'amalat*. The first is that acts of worship are devotional and should be performed in order to attain proximity to God

(*taqarrub*).<sup>985</sup> This means that a worshiper should recite his prayers with the intention of drawing closer to Him, and such an intention is one of the important conditions for the validity of His worship. However, there are no such conditions for the validity of transactions. A seller, for instance, can sell his house without such an intention. The second difference is that *'ibadat* are legislated solely by the founder of religion. Their forms and conditions are set only by Him.<sup>986</sup> However, in the realm of social interactions, the founder of the religion is not the innovator. Since the dawn of humanity, people have been selling and buying properties. Therefore, in the realm of *mu'amalat*, the principles of *shari'ah* are to draw up a framework for acceptable transactions based on the ethos and precepts of religion.

#### 6.7.2.1 Similarities and Dissimilarities

Having said that, Javadi and Ayoub hold that, in the realm of religious rulings, there are many similarities amongst the revealed religions.<sup>987</sup> Javadi, as has been explained before, addresses the issue of the diversity of revealed *shari'ahs* more clearly and precisely than Ayoub. He states that the central principles of religious rulings, such as the obligation to worship God, paying charity and avoiding injustice, are the same in all divine *shari'ahs*. Yet there is some dissimilarity in the forms and conditions of these religious practices.<sup>988</sup> He asserts that, in principle, the schemes of practice of all divine Prophets are the same, and the differences, admitted by the Qur'an in "for every nation We had appointed a rite [of worship]"<sup>989</sup>—only refer to the details and forms and formulas of religious acts.<sup>990</sup>

Ayoub also asserts that there are many common grounds and similarities in the realm of religious practices in the revealed religions. He says that Christianity and Islam

<sup>985</sup> Muhammad Hasan Najafi, *Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Sharayi' al-Ahkam*, 43 vols., vol. 19 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1983). 155.

<sup>986</sup> Muhammad Rida Muzaffar, *Usul al-Fiqh*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Isma'iliyyah, n.d). 43.

<sup>987</sup> Calvin argues that, as McGrath states, the Old Testament and New Testament "are basically identical". He holds that they are different in "*administratio* but not in *substantia*". This means that in terms of content and substance there is no any essential discontinuity between them. McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 110. See also; Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion*. 24-5; Taliaferro, *Contemporary philosophy*. 17-8; Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*. 41.

<sup>988</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 118-122; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 213.

<sup>989</sup> *The Qur'an*. 22:67. See also; 5:48.

<sup>990</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 71. See also; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2. 195.

“have far more in common than the theologians” of both religions have accepted.<sup>991</sup> The Qur’an considers itself not as “contradicting or replacing” the previous Books but as “confirming them”.<sup>992</sup> He states that Prophet Muhammad believed his teachings to be consonant with the Old and New Testaments.<sup>993</sup> The Qur’an, he adds, considers both the Old and New Testaments to be sources of “guidance and light,” making them arbitrators in any conflict for the people of the Books.<sup>994</sup> Therefore, there are indeed many similar religious practices in the Abrahamic religions.

In the realm of religious precepts, a very crucial question concerns the reasons for, and the roots of, differences. Although there are many instances of similarity among the revealed religions in practice, yet ideally one would assume that revelation must rule out all instances of difference. Suppose that Prophets Jesus’ and Muhammad’s *shari’ahs* are comprised of nine hundred religious laws. And suppose that having compared the two *shari’ahs*, we realized that, for instance, six hundred laws of these religions are the same, but the remaining three hundred are different. The important question here is why one third of these laws should be different. If both *shari’ahs* stemmed from one source of revelation, and each prophet was obliged to confirm the previous prophet, why did they result in different religious rulings? We can start discussing this by drawing on a very important question posed by Rodney Stark. He states that in the “godly religions”, one of the questions that affect the religious life of believers is “What do the gods want?”<sup>995</sup> Drawing on this statement, we can ask, would God really want diversity or unity of *shari’ahs* in revealed religions? This is what we need to discuss in the next section.

#### **6.7.2.1.1 Ayoub and the Rationale for Dissimilarities of *Shari’ahs***

Ayoub and Javadi present two different answers to this conundrum. Ayoub mainly explains the differences based on cultural and historical contexts. He says that God

---

<sup>991</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 22.

<sup>992</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>993</sup> The Qur’an says, “He has sent down to you the Book with the truth confirming what was [revealed] before it, and He had sent down the Torah and the Evangel”. *The Qur’an*.3:3. See also 2:41; 2:9 ; 3:50; 4:47; 5:46; 5:48 and 35:31.

<sup>994</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18-20. For the verses, see, *The Qur’an*. 5:46-7. See also; Ayoub, "Pope John Paul II." 328.

<sup>995</sup> Stark, "Economics of Religion." 51.

has sent many Prophets to guide man in every society at different times.<sup>996</sup> They would speak the language of each community “within its own historical context”. There is no doubt that the message of Prophets to other communities “may be different and sometimes vastly different” from what Prophet Muhammad conveyed to Muslims.<sup>997</sup> This is because as God emphasizes His oneness, He simultaneously underlines the diversity of human beings. This diversity was not due to the piecemeal deterioration of man “from an ideal or utopian state”, “lack of divine guidance” or lack of man’s appreciation. Ayoub believes that “humanity began as one and must remain one”, “it is unity in diversity”. For him, the diversity of *shari’ahs* is a natural feature of human life, a life that stems from a variety of man’s “cultures, languages, races” and the diverse conditions of society.<sup>998</sup>

The religious direction of humankind, according to the verses mentioned above, is from unity to diversity. This diversity was not due to lack of divine teachings or deficiency in “human understanding”. Ayoub indeed believes that “we have the synthesis of this Qur’anic dialectic: it is unity in diversity. Unity is the essence of our understanding of the Oneness of God, in *Tawhid*, as expressed in the *shahada*, ‘There is no god except Allah’. It is also the basis of the essential unity of all creation and of humankind. But diversity” is an inevitable “consequence of geography, of language or of what we may positively call the rich variety of human civilizations”.<sup>999</sup> He emphasizes that we are different, and this is God’s will<sup>1000</sup> since the Qur’an states, “Had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community”.<sup>1001</sup>

In Ayoub’s view, human communities are different and various. It is God’s will that we should be different.<sup>1002</sup> The Qur’an does not criticize diversity but rather conflict and enmity. From the Islamic viewpoint, diversity and differences are acceptable and good, but enmity and conflict are unacceptable.<sup>1003</sup> He holds that plurality is not bad;

---

<sup>996</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Tradition." 349.

<sup>997</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11.

<sup>998</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 108; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

<sup>999</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 109.

<sup>1000</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 16; Ayoub, "Islam between Ideals and Idologies." 299-230.

<sup>1001</sup> *The Qur'an*. 11:118.

<sup>1002</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

<sup>1003</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 108-9; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

indeed, “it is an act of divine mercy that we are” not similar. In the light of this diversity, “we can have a rich spirituality that takes different forms and different traditions.”<sup>1004</sup> He maintains that the diversity of *shari‘ahs* is a consequence of the diversity in races and languages. It is, moreover, a sign of the wisdom of God in the “ordering of human society”.<sup>1005</sup> Ayoub, therefore, states that the Qur’an accepts and appreciates the plurality of *shari‘ahs* within the unity of God. This unity, which started with Prophet Adam was maintained until the demise of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>1006</sup>

Ayoub adds “We are one humanity, but we are also different peoples, cultures, and religious communities”.<sup>1007</sup> Ayoub, according to the verse “had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community”<sup>1008</sup> adds that “we are different”, and this is His will.<sup>1009</sup> He, like some other Muslim pluralists,<sup>1010</sup> holds that the diversity of religions is the consequence of the races and languages of humankind.<sup>1011</sup> Based on the Qur’an, as Ayoub argues, the diversity of religions is a sign of “divine wisdom”.<sup>1012</sup>

To sum up, Ayoub believes that the diversity of *shari‘ahs* is natural in human life. It stems from the variety of races, languages, cultures and conditions of societies. The Qur’an accepts the diversity of *shari‘ahs* in the light and context of God’s unity.

In order to fortify Ayoub’s claim about the diversity of *shari‘ahs*, two arguments can be conceived from his works. The first is his contention that Prophet Muhammad did not request the Jews and Christians to abandon their teachings and accept Islam. Rather he requested them to have a sincere faith in Allah and to perform good deeds according to their own teachings.<sup>1013</sup> He only expected them to “recognize him as a

---

<sup>1004</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 15.

<sup>1005</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

<sup>1006</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 110. Mahmut Aydin, from the school of ahl-Sunna, highlights Ayoub’s view. Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 38.

<sup>1007</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 9.

<sup>1008</sup> *The Qur’an*. 11:118.

<sup>1009</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 16.

<sup>1010</sup> Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*. 16.

<sup>1011</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

<sup>1012</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 46.

<sup>1013</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 200

prophet” and admit his Book as Holy Scripture.<sup>1014</sup> Ayoub is convinced that “neither the Qur’an nor” Prophet Muhammad requested the people of the Book to abandon their religions in order to live in peace with Muslims.<sup>1015</sup> Ayoub, therefore, believes that Prophet Muhammad accepted the diversity of the previously revealed *shari’ahs*. Otherwise, he should have demanded the Jews and Christians to abandon their faiths and embrace his teachings.

His second argument is that if the diversity of *shari’ahs* were contrary to Muhammad’s teachings, he would have abrogated them. Although Ayoub does not address the question of abrogation comprehensively in his works; nevertheless, he, like some Muslim pluralists<sup>1016</sup>, holds that Prophet Muhammad did not abrogate the previous *shari’ahs*.<sup>1017</sup> It seems that, for Ayoub, the reason for such a claim is that Prophet Muhammad saw Islam as another manifestation of the revealed religions and, moreover, his religion was the faith of all the divine prophets.<sup>1018</sup> Furthermore, the Qur’an, in the eyes of Ayoub, was never “contradicting or replacing” previous Books, but rather “confirming them”.<sup>1019</sup> For Ayoub, the Qur’an is not a replacement for the previous Books, and it means that Prophet Muhammad did not abrogate the previous *shari’ahs*. Ayoub expostulates Sayyid Qutb, who based his reasoning for the invalidity of the previous *shari’ahs* on the principle of abrogation, and clearly declares that this “view of abrogation has no clear Qur’anic basis, nor has it been universally accepted”.<sup>1020</sup> Ayoub holds that abrogation contradicts the “Qur’anic theology of the universality of faith and plurality of religions and the equality of all” the messengers of God.<sup>1021</sup>

It should be noted that the renowned mystic, Ibn ‘Arabi, supports Ayoub’s viewpoint in this regard. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, the Qur’an never criticizes the *shari’ahs* of

---

<sup>1014</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 53. See also; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*.103; Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 36; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14.

<sup>1015</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 3; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 103.

<sup>1016</sup> Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). 31-2.

<sup>1017</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18.

<sup>1018</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>1019</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>1020</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 193.

<sup>1021</sup> Ibid. 192.

previous Prophets, but rather condemns distortions and misunderstandings by Jews and Christians. Ibn ‘Arabi does not conclude what many Muslim theologians have concluded, namely, that Prophet Muhammad abrogated the previous traditions.<sup>1022</sup> He argues, “Islam is like the sun and other religions like the stars. Just as the stars remain when the sun rises, so also” do “the other religions remain valid when Islam appears”. Ibn ‘Arabi says that all the prophetic religions [*shari‘ahs*] “are lights”, but Prophet Muhammad’s *shari‘ah* is “like the light of the sun among the lights of the stars”. Although the rising of the sun hides the lights of stars, “their lights are included in the light of the sun”. Their invisible light is “like the abrogation” of the previous traditions. However, the previous religions “exist, just as the existence of the light of the stars is actualized”. With such a poetic example, he concludes that this is the reason why Muslims have been obliged in their “all-inclusive religion” to believe in the previous Books as well.<sup>1023</sup>

However, to answer Ibn ‘Arabi in his own poetic demonstration, one may claim there would be no need for the stars of other religions if the sun of Islam is there to provide such a strong light. If the stars were enough for lighting, why then, did God send the strong light, that is, Islam? If every religion discovers only part of the truth, why did He not send one religion in which to manifest the whole truth?

At any rate, while Ayoub maintains that the “view of abrogation has no clear Qur’anic basis, nor has it been universally accepted”,<sup>1024</sup> many Shi‘ah scholars state that Prophet Muhammad abrogated the previous *shari‘ahs*. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid (948-1022), the well-known Shi‘ah jurist and theologian, clearly stated that “the *shari‘ah* of Prophet Muhammad abrogated the previous *shari‘ahs* and apposed them”.<sup>1025</sup> Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, the architect of Shi‘ah thought in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, states that “the correct view is that the *shari‘ah* of Prophet Muhammad abrogated all the preceding *shari‘ahs*”.<sup>1026</sup> Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Ardabili, known as al-

<sup>1022</sup> For these Muslim thinkers in recent decades, see; Muhammad Husein Tabataba’i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, 20 vols., vol. 5 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996). 349; *ibid.*, 18. 30; Mughniyyah, *al-Tafsir al-Kashif*, 1. 35.

<sup>1023</sup> Muhy al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi, *al-Futihat al-Makkiyyah*, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1911). 153. See also; Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*. 125.

<sup>1024</sup> Ayoub, “Nearest in Amity.” 193.

<sup>1025</sup> Al-Mufid, *al-Mughni‘ah*. 30.

<sup>1026</sup> Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 2. 534.



Muqaddas al-Ardabili<sup>1027</sup> (1500-1585), and Amin al-Islam Tabarsi presented the same view. The latter states that Prophet Muhammad's *shari'ah* abrogated all the previous ones and all human beings should cling to his *shari'ah* till the day of judgement.<sup>1028</sup>

In sum, for Ayoub, the diversity of revealed *shari'ahs* is a consequence of the diversity of races and languages. In other words, the multiplicity of races and languages necessitates the diversity of religious laws. God wills the diversity of revealed *shari'ahs* in the context of His unity. Ayoub, in order to prove his claim, gives two reasons. First, Prophet Muhammad did not request others to abandon their faiths and embrace his teachings. Second, he did not abrogate the previous laws.

Having addressed the views of Ayoub on the philosophy of differences in the realm of revealed *shari'ahs*, we shall now examine Javadi's views.

#### **6.7.2.1.2 Javadi and the Rationale for Dissimilarities of *Shari'ahs***

Javadi, referring to the verse "for each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path"<sup>1029</sup>, holds that the Qur'an confirms the diversity of *shari'ahs* which are presented via the Major Prophets.<sup>1030</sup> He holds that the central themes and principles, such as prayers, fasting and donations, are the same. These main themes were confirmed by Prophet Muhammad and are not reasonably subject to abrogation.<sup>1031</sup> The differences only relate to the conditions and forms of religious practices. In other words, Islam only abrogated some conditions, details and forms of the previous religious practices, leaving its principles intact.<sup>1032</sup>

But why cannot the main categories of the previous *shari'ah* laws be abrogated or changed by the following prophet and should remain the same? Javadi, as has been discussed in detail in the fourth chapter, would answer that all these categories

<sup>1027</sup> Ahmad Al-Ardabili, *Zubdah al-Bayan fi Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-Murtadawiyah, n.d). 399, 386.

<sup>1028</sup> Amin al-Islam Al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 10 vols., vol. 1 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Nasir Khusru, 1993). 476.

<sup>1029</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:48.

<sup>1030</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2.131; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 145-6.

<sup>1031</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 162; *ibid.*, 13. 454; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 456.

<sup>1032</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 9. 175; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 80; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 7. 300; *ibid.*, 9. 175-6; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 398.

conform to man's *fitrah*, which, in the course of human life, is not changeable. Javadi, in the light of these two premises, concludes that the central principles of all revealed *shari'ahs* are equal and consequently not abrogable.<sup>1033</sup> This leads us to yet another question. If *fitrah* is unchangeable, then what is the reason for dissimilarities amongst the revealed *shari'ahs*? In other words, if every individual, from the dawn of man's creation, has been created with a pure and equal *fitrah*, all the religious *shari'ahs* should be exactly the same. So, what is the secret of these dissimilarities?

In reply to this question, Javadi argues that these minor dissimilarities were the result of the difference in the times and places in which the communities lived and the specific features of those communities.<sup>1034</sup> He adds that even in Islam the religious rulings were presented gradually to the people. It means that certain things were not prohibited (*haram*) at the beginning but were banned later.<sup>1035</sup> Javadi, however, does not go into detail as to how exactly the different times and places necessitated minor dissimilarities.

In summary, in Javadi's opinion, the main elements of religious laws and principles of all the revealed *shari'ahs* are the same, and the differences are confined to minor issues, relating to the conditions and forms of religious practices. The important question is whether Islam abrogated these minor issues. In other words, if Prophet Muhammad declared a new form of prayer, did he mean the previous form of prayer to be abrogated?

Javadi's answer is positive. He holds that Prophet Muhammad abrogated even the minor laws derived from previous *shari'ahs*. He insists that, due to this abrogation, all religious practices should be fulfilled according to the new *shari'ah*. Following the Jews, Muslims used to pray towards the Farthest Mosque (*Masjid al-Aqsa*) but he changed the direction of prayer towards the Sacred Mosque (*Masjid al-Haram*). Therefore, performing the prayer towards the previous direction is not considered as a good deed and is against God's will.<sup>1036</sup> Since all religious obligations should be

---

<sup>1033</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 12. 145; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 94; *ibid.*, 22. 544; Javadi, *Islam va Muhit-i Zist*, 310; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 17. 123.

<sup>1034</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*, 118-9.

<sup>1035</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 17. 125.

<sup>1036</sup> *Ibid.*, 5. 66-7.

performed according to the new *shari'ah*, if someone, for instance, practices his prayer according to the previous *shari'ah*, it will not be considered as a good deed.<sup>1037</sup> This argument, therefore, implies the invalidity of those practices.

But what about the verse “He has sent down to you the Book with the truth confirming what was [revealed] before it?”<sup>1038</sup> Does this not imply that the Qur'an confirms the Old and New Testaments and accepts their validity? In reply, Javadi refers to one of the great Qur'anic exegetes, al-Alusi (1802- 1854). Al-Alusi holds that the confirmation of the Qur'an means that these teachings were the best and the most perfect in their own times. This means that the Qur'an confirms the validity of those Books only at their own time. He adds that even if the Qur'an had been revealed at that time, its contents would have been like the Old and New Testaments.<sup>1039</sup> Javadi adds that none of the Major Prophets confirm and totally accept the previous *shari'ahs* with all their details.<sup>1040</sup>

In short, each Major Prophet, while conforming to the teachings of the previous Major Prophet, slightly changes and abrogates some forms and conditions of ritual practices. The best evidence for such a claim is what the Qur'an says of Prophet Jesus: “and [I come] to confirm [the truth of] that which is before me of the Torah, and to make lawful for you some of the things that were forbidden you”.<sup>1041</sup> This verse clearly proves that Prophet Jesus abrogated some parts of Prophet Moses' *shari'ah*.

In summary, Javadi holds that all the main laws of the revealed *shari'ahs* are the same. The reason for their similarities is that these laws in all the *shari'ahs* are rooted in the *fitrah*. Since man possesses an immutable *fitrah*, and since the main laws of all revealed religions have been based on it, they must be the same and cannot be subjected to abrogation. He adds that minor religious laws can be subjected to alteration since they are not rooted in the immutable *fitrah*, but rather stem from the conditions of time and specific features of the people at that time.

<sup>1037</sup> Ibid., 2. 61,472; ibid., 5.40; ibid., 20. 524.

<sup>1038</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:3. See also 2:97; 3:50; 4:47 and 5:46.

<sup>1039</sup> Mahmud Al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, 16 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994). 246.

<sup>1040</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 4.78-9; ibid., 7. 300; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 721; ibid., 2. 196.

<sup>1041</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:50.

Having addressed the standpoints of the two thinkers on the dissimilarity of the revealed *shari'ahs*, the following section will attempt to compare and evaluate them.

## 6.8 Evaluation

The contents of the previous *shari'ahs*, in comparison to the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad, can be classified into the following two categories: distorted parts and undistorted parts. The undistorted can also be classified into two groups, namely, similar and different. The parts which have been subjected to alteration can no longer convey God's words, and since they are the work of human beings, they hold no ritual value. As the Qur'an states, some Jewish scholars, pursuing their own worldly goals, wrote "the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah'".<sup>1042</sup> These types of religious practices, in both Ayoub and Javadi's perspective surely have lost their validity even for the followers of those *shari'ahs*.

The other part of the previous *shari'ahs* which is held in common with the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad is not subject to dispute and is valid in Islam. Even Muslim jurists took one step further and held that, if we know a particular religious practice was compulsory (*vajib*) in the previous *shari'ah* but we cannot find any authentic evidence signifying its legal status in Islam, it can be deduced, via the principle of *istishab* (presumption of continuity), that particular law is compulsory in Islam as well.<sup>1043</sup> As explained in the second chapter, the religious rulings of the previous *shari'ahs* can, therefore, be considered as a religious source for Muslim jurists. They can rely on the previous *shari'ahs* on condition that they cannot find any authentic evidence in their own Islamic sources. The controversial question is the religious practices of previous *shari'ahs* that are different from the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad. Two points were examined according to Ayoub's and Javadi's perspectives: the reason for these dissimilarities and their views regarding their validity.

---

<sup>1042</sup> Ibid. 2:79.

<sup>1043</sup> Al-Ansari, *Fara'id al-'Usul*, 2. 655-9; Muhammad Jawad Al-'Amili, *Miftah al-Kiramah*, 21 vols., vol. 12 (Qum: Nashr-i Islami, 1998). 374. See also; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 22. 503.

1- As far as Javadi is concerned, the dissimilarities amongst the revealed *shari'ahs* are the result of the conditions of the time and the place of revelation.<sup>1044</sup> Ayoub, on the other hand, holds that the dissimilarities amongst the *shari'ahs* are natural and are the consequence of the variety of "cultures, languages" and races.<sup>1045</sup> Ayoub, however, does not present any historical, rational or practical evidence for his claim and does not clarify how the multiplicity of races, cultures and languages necessitates the diversity of religious laws. According to the Islamic perspective, God sent five *shari'ahs* in the past via His Major Prophets. For Ayoub, there should have been only five languages and races between the first and the fifth Major Prophet. Moreover, what are the characteristics of language and race which make for the diversity of laws? Why should the religious laws of English speakers be different from those of French speakers? What are the characteristics of the Arabic language, for instance, which require different religious laws? If all human beings in future are able to speak the same language, will we still need such a diversity of *shari'ahs*? Suppose that today, in the world of technology and mass media, God wants to send a new Prophet. Would He send him only for specific language speakers or for all people? These questions need to be addressed by Ayoub.

However, according to Javadi's view that the different religious laws were the result of the conditions of the time and place of revelation, there is no need for such questions. Javadi contends that man's intellectual capacity and knowledge have improved in the course of time so that his present capabilities are not comparable to those of man in the past. The Prophets, due to lack of man's capacity, were unable at the time to draw a full and complete map of his destination. They had to take them forward step-by-step. Consequently, they could not convey more than what their audience could acquire and understand. Therefore, each *shari'ah*, as Javadi insists, improved on the previous one.<sup>1046</sup> The nature of religious laws is that they should be sent gradually. He adds that even in Islam the religious rulings were presented

---

<sup>1044</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 118-9.

<sup>1045</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 108; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 189.

<sup>1046</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-4; *ibid.*, 13. 452.

piecemeal to the people. It means that some rulings were not prohibited (*haram*) at the beginning of Islam and were banned later.<sup>1047</sup>

For Javadi, the reason for the dissimilarities is improvement, but for Ayoub, it is an outcome of the diversity of cultures, languages and races at different times. However, Javadi faces a critical question. Did not man advance in his capacity and capability since the time of Prophet Muhammad? If his argument holds for the people before Prophet Muhammad, why not for those after him? We know that in the last couple of centuries, science and technology have advanced significantly, and, as a result, social structures have dramatically transformed and require new appropriate legal apparatus. Based on Javadi's argument, man is now in need of a new *shari'ah*. Javadi answers this critique by drawing on the concept of termination of prophethood in Prophet Muhammad. Mohammad was the seal of the Prophets, and as such, his *shari'ah* would not need any improvement as it has been endowed with such mechanism that enables the jurists to address all the basic needs of man.<sup>1048</sup>

2- Both Javadi and Ayoub hold that Islam complements the previous Books. Javadi states that the Prophet sustained the beliefs and principle precepts of the previous Books and completed them.<sup>1049</sup> Ayoub states "the Prophet of Islam regards his message to be consonant with, and complementary to" the previous Books.<sup>1050</sup> The term "complementary" denotes that there were somehow deficiencies in the previous Books in such a way that the Prophet completed them. Therefore, for Ayoub and Javadi, Islam, in comparison to the previous religions, is more comprehensive and is a perfect religion. While Ayoub does not mention what sort of deficiencies were there in previous *shari'ahs* and how the Prophet completed them, Javadi tries to prove the comprehensiveness of Islam on four grounds. The confirmation, guardianship and finality of the Qur'an are the most important indicators which lead Javadi to believe in the perfection of Islam.

---

<sup>1047</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 17. 125.

<sup>1048</sup> Javadi, *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. 215-227; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 286; Javadi, *Manzilat-i 'Aql*. 178-80.

<sup>1049</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 65-7; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 286.

<sup>1050</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18-9.

Javadi states that man has gradually progressed towards the path of perfection. Due to his efforts, human beings have attempted to increase the scope of their intelligence and learning to the extent that their current capacity for knowledge far surpasses that of their distant ancestors. Therefore, the Prophets in the past, due to man's lack of intellectual capacity, could not present a full and complete plan for life and its purpose. They were obliged to lead and take him forward step-by-step. According to the hadith of Prophet Muhammad, the Prophets were required to teach the people according to the level of their intelligence and learning.<sup>1051</sup> Quite simply, they could not convey more than what their audience could acquire and understand. With the improvement in man's comprehension, each Major Prophet could present notions and practices which could not have been presented before.<sup>1052</sup> With the improvement in humans' intelligence and capacity for knowledge, the tools of divine guidance should be developed to such an extent that the most perfect torch of guidance should be bestowed upon the most perfect and final Prophet.<sup>1053</sup>

While Javadi and Ayoub both agree that Islam complements the previous Books, Javadi draws a conclusion which Ayoub does not agree with. Javadi states that the comprehensiveness of Islam implies the invalidity of the previous *shari'ahs*. He believes that with the existence of a perfect *shari'ah*, wisdom decrees the invalidity of imperfect *shari'ahs*.<sup>1054</sup> However, Ayoub does not agree with such a conclusion since the Prophet, in the eyes of Ayoub, did not request the followers of the previous Books to abandon them and embrace Islam.<sup>1055</sup> The core reason for these different conclusions lies in different methodologies used by Ayoub and Javadi. Javadi draws rational conclusions from certain verses of the Qur'an, like "today I have perfected your religion for you"<sup>1056</sup> and deduces that while the most perfect is available, going to the less perfect is rationally unacceptable. Ayoub, however, trusts historical facts more than such rational conclusions.

---

<sup>1051</sup> Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 1. 23.

<sup>1052</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 603-4. 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 11 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2008). 96-7.

<sup>1053</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 6. 364-9; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 13. 456-7.

<sup>1054</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 220.

<sup>1055</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 53. See also; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 103; Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 36; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14; Ayoub, "Introduction." 3; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 103.

<sup>1056</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:3.

Whatever the case, it can be argued that the comprehensiveness of Islam is a totally faith-biased contention and cannot be an independent criterion to be used to convince the followers of other religions. They may, referring to their own texts, claim the comprehensiveness of their faith, too.

3- Ayoub holds that the Qur'an accepts the diversity of revealed *shari'ahs* within the context of God's unity.<sup>1057</sup> Such diversity is His will and a sign of "divine wisdom".<sup>1058</sup> If by "the diversity is His will," Ayoub means that those *shari'ahs* were sent down by God, Javadi agrees with it. However, if he assumes their validity after the appearance of Islam, it implies the locality of all revealed *shari'ahs* and Javadi disagree with it. In other words, the consequence of such a claim is that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all local religions.

The universality or regionality of major religions is one of the important questions which has always engaged the minds of theologians. Christian theologians believe that the realm of Christianity is universal, that it is for all man, in all places and times.<sup>1059</sup> John Calvin (1509-64), held that the Old Testament was revealed only for the Jewish people but the message of the New Testament was "universal in its scope".<sup>1060</sup> The Qur'an also considers the prophethood of Jesus to be universal.<sup>1061</sup>

Is the mission of Prophet Muhammad universal as well? Ayoub, in his works, presents two different viewpoints. On the one hand, he claims that Muhammad's message is universal.<sup>1062</sup> On the other hand, he maintains that the Prophet did not demand the Christians to abandon their own faiths and embrace his teachings. This indirectly implies that his mission and *shari'ah* had a local nature and were not universal. He holds that Prophet Muhammad never called upon the Jews or Christians to leave their religions and accept his teachings. Based on the verse "Say, 'O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will

---

<sup>1057</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 110.

<sup>1058</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 46.

<sup>1059</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 416; Gard, *Catholicism*. 108.

<sup>1060</sup> McGrath, *Christian Theology*. 165.

<sup>1061</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:3-4. The Qur'an considers the prophecy of Moses universal. See, *ibid.* 6:91; 21:48 and 46:29-30.

<sup>1062</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21; Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65; Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life." 20; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 104.



worship no one but Allah””,<sup>1063</sup> Ayoub holds that Prophet Muhammad called the Christians and Jews not to convert to Islam but to accept “him as the last in the long series of Prophets which they themselves recognized”.<sup>1064</sup> Ayoub is convinced that Prophet Muhammad did not expect the Christians and Jews to abandon their traditions and embrace Islam “unless they wanted to”; he only wanted them “to observe God’s continuous care for” human beings and to admit that he was a “genuine prophet”. He stresses that the original request of the Qur’anic verses for Christians and Jews “is simply to accept Muhammad as a Prophet and Islam as an authentic religion, without necessarily” leaving their own *shari’ahs*.<sup>1065</sup>

This opinion leaves Ayoub with two contradictory propositions. On the one hand, he states that Muhammad’s mission is universal<sup>1066</sup> and, on the other hand, he maintains that he did not command the Christians to abandon their own teachings and accept his faith. It could be argued that the Qur’an, as Javadi states and Ayoub admits, on many occasions declares Prophet Muhammad’s mission to be universal. The content of many Qur’anic verses refers to his mission’s universal nature and addresses not a specific nation but all peoples.<sup>1067</sup> The Qur’an says, “We did not send you except as a bearer of good news and warner to all mankind”<sup>1068</sup>; “we did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations”<sup>1069</sup>; and “Say ‘O, mankind! I am the Apostle of Allah to you all’”.<sup>1070</sup> These verses clearly indicate the universality of his mission to all people and not to a particular region or nation. Moreover, some verses particularly address

<sup>1063</sup> *The Qur’an*. 3:64.

<sup>1064</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 103.

<sup>1065</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14; Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 53; See also; Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 200, 203. It seems that, for the first time, Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), the famous Hungarian orientalist, cast the universality of Prophet Muhammad’s mission in doubt. He argued that the teachings of Muhammad, even in his own time, were not universal. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* [Vorlesungen über den Islam], trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). 31. For Arabic translation, see; Ignaz Goldziher, *al-‘Aqidah wa al-Shari’ah fi al-Islam*, trans. Muhammad Yusuf, Ali Hasan ‘Abual Qadir, and ‘Abdul ‘Aziz ‘Abdul Haq, 2 ed. (Baghdad/Egypt: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah/Maktabah al-Muthnna, 1959). 43. Joachim Wach also stresses the locality of the religion of Islam. He holds that Prophet Muhammad emphasized that he was an “Arab Prophet with a message to Arab People”. Wach, *Sociology*. 304.

<sup>1066</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21; Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65; Ayoub, "The Qur’an in Muslim Life." 20; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 104.

<sup>1067</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 266-7.

<sup>1068</sup> *The Qur’an*. 34:28.

<sup>1069</sup> *Ibid*. 21:107

<sup>1070</sup> *Ibid*. 7:158

the people of the Book to embrace Islam. "O people of the Book! Certainly, our Apostle has come to you, clarifying [the Divine teachings] for you after a gap in [the appearance of] the apostles, lest you should say, 'there did not come to us any bearer of good news nor any warner.'" <sup>1071</sup>

Further evidence for the universality of Islam, as Javadi claims, is that Prophet Muhammad did not confine his mission only to the Arab peninsula but also dispatched emissaries to the kings, princes and heads of tribes with a letter declaring not only his universal prophethood but also insisting on the fact that only those who accepted his teachings could reach the grace of God and paradise. In a letter to Heraclius, the Christian emperor of Byzantine, for instance, the Prophet called on him to convert to Islam. He wrote to him that if he admitted Islam, God would give him "two bounteous rewards" (for his own conversion and for the faith of his subjects) and if he rejected Islam, he would be blamed not only for his own sins but also for the sins of his followers. <sup>1072</sup>

In Javadi's view, documents like this indicate that Prophet Muhammad's call was universal and not limited to a specific geographical or cultural context. Thus, Ayoub's claim and that of some other Muslim pluralists <sup>1073</sup> that Muhammad did not expect the people of the Book to embrace his *shari'ah* is inconsistent with Javadi's perspective. It is worth noting that some Western scholars, too, hold that "Islam is in principle a universal religion". <sup>1074</sup> It is strange that in none of his works, as far as I know, Ayoub ever alludes to the letters sent by the Prophet to heads of other nations. This may be due to mere negligence or due to his lack of confidence in the authenticity of those documents. The latter is highly improbable since he freely uses other historical narrations without having scruples to verify their provenance. His negligence is strange, too, since many Shi'ah and Sunni historians have reported these letters and have endorsed their authenticity. <sup>1075</sup>

---

<sup>1071</sup> Ibid.5:19; Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 266-8.

<sup>1072</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 523-6; *ibid.*, 13. 41-2; *ibid.*, 17. 53, 69-70; Javadi, *Rawabit-i Bayn*. 107-8.

<sup>1073</sup> Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 39.

<sup>1074</sup> Smith, *Islam in Modern*. 292.

<sup>1075</sup> For the references for these letters, see; Al-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Tabari*, 2. 649; Muhammad Al-Salihi, *Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-'Ibad*, 12 vols., vol. 11 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub

4- In addition to his contradictory stance mentioned above, Ayoub argues that both Islam and Christianity “came with the claim that they are universal” religions, that is, for all human beings.<sup>1076</sup> However, two religions cannot be universal at the same time since the universality of the new religion indirectly invalidates the previous one’s claim of universality. Ayoub is well aware that the universality of *shari’ahs* is incompatible with the diversity of *shari’ahs*. That is why he states that the universality of faith can create obstacles in the way of constructive dialogue.<sup>1077</sup> The universality of every *shari’ah*, as Javadi indirectly states, implies the invalidity of the previous ones.<sup>1078</sup> Moreover, it seems that there is a kind of inconsistency in Ayoub’s views about the status of the Qur’an. On the one hand, he states in his recent work that the “Qur’an saw itself not as contradicting or replacing these Scriptures, but as confirming” the previous Books.<sup>1079</sup> On the other hand, he states that “Islam regards its message to be consonant with, and complementary to” the previous Books.<sup>1080</sup> The term “replacement” contradicts the term “complement”. If the Qur’an has the status of being complementary to previous Books, it means the Qur’an brings something new, which will give it the status of being a replacement for previous Books. In other words, some parts of the previous Books will be replaced with the new message of Islam. Ayoub, moreover, considers the Qur’an as “superseding” the previous Books.<sup>1081</sup> The term “superseding” with reference to the Qur’an denotes that some parts of the previous Books should be replaced by the new teachings of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, Ayoub’s claim that “the Qur’an saw itself not as

---

al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1993). 353; ‘Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun, *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun*, 8 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988). 266; Ahmad Al-Ya‘qubi, *Tarikh al-Ya‘qubi*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1960). 77; Muhammad al-Dhahabi, *Tarikh al-Islami*, 57 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Arabi, 1987). 504-5; Muhammad Al-Ya‘muri, *Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghazi wa al-Shama’il wa al-Siyar*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1999). 326; Ahmad Al-Bayhaqi, *Dala’il al-Nubuwwah wa Ma’rifah Ahwal Sahib al-Shari’ah*, 7 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1984). 379-80; Ahmad Al-Miqrizi, *Amta’ al-Asma’ bima li al-Nabiyy min al-Ahwal wa al-Amwal wa al-Hafadah wa al-Mata’*, 15 vols., vol. 12 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1999). 128-9; Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 111 vols., vol. 20 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1982). 386; Ahmad Ahmadi, *Makatib al-Rasul*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Sab, n.d). 105. Ayatollah Ahmad Ahmadi (d. 2000) has collected numerous letters of the Prophet in *Makatib al-Rasul (The Letters of the Prophet)*.

<sup>1076</sup> Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 11; See also; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21; Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65; Ayoub, "The Qur’an in Muslim Life." 20; Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 104.

<sup>1077</sup> Ayoub, "Christian-Muslim Dialogue." 65.

<sup>1078</sup> Javadi, *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*, 7. 266.

<sup>1079</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction." 2.

<sup>1080</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18.

<sup>1081</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 97-8.

contradicting or replacing these Scriptures, but as confirming them”<sup>1082</sup> does not conform to the superseding aspect of the Qur’an.

To sum up, Ayoub and Javadi both accept that there are many similarities between the prophetic *shari’ahs* in the realm of religious practice. In Ayoub’s opinion, the differences are the result of the multiplicity of cultures, races and languages. In other words, the diversity of cultures, races and languages implies a diversity of *shari’ahs* that is the will of God and the sign of “divine wisdom”. Javadi, on the other hand, holds that the diversity of the revealed *shari’ahs* was the result of the conditions of the time and place of the revelation. Ayoub maintains that Prophet Muhammad did not abrogate the previous *shari’ahs*. Javadi believes that the Prophet, while confirming the general principles of previous *shari’ahs*, has abrogated their forms and details. For Javadi, every religious practice should be performed according to the new *shari’ah*.

## **6.9 Ayoub and Javadi: Comparison with Western Pluralists and Exclusivists**

Pluralism and exclusivism are terms coined and used mainly by Christian theologians. In the course of this thesis we have used these terms freely to classify Muslim theologians and in particular Ayoub and Javadi. However, as the history of Muslim and Christian theologies are different, and the background, sources, and fundamental concepts of their theologies may differ, we have to be cautious attributing these titles to Muslim scholars. As such, it is appropriate to compare briefly the views of Ayoub, as an Abrahamic Muslim pluralist, and Javadi, as a sort of Muslim exclusivist, with the views of their Christian counterparts. I will discuss each in turn.

### **6.9.1 Ayoub and Hick**

Since John Hick is perhaps “the most thorough and far-reaching representative” of religious pluralism,<sup>1083</sup> this section limits itself to comparing Ayoub’s views with

---

<sup>1082</sup> Ayoub, "Introduction."2.

<sup>1083</sup> D’Costa, *Theology and Religious Pluralism*. 22; O’keeffe, "Religion and Pluralism." 63.

those of Hick. Hick attempts to address the validity of main religions from two angles. First, he tries to highlight mercy as the most outstanding of God's attributes. He maintains that "God is the God of universal love" and "Father of all mankind"<sup>1084</sup> and His mercy covers all human beings.<sup>1085</sup> It means that He "wills the ultimate good and salvation of all men".<sup>1086</sup> Therefore, due to His mercy, God presents true religions to all mankind. From a second angle, Hick brings in his epistemological approach. For him different religions are different understandings of the same reality. This includes the impression of the founders of religions who depict different conceptions of the one Reality and the diversity which stems from different interpretations of the believers of that one Reality.<sup>1087</sup> He tries to justify his view by referring to the story of the elephant and four blind men.<sup>1088</sup> According to this view, the classification of religions into true and false will be pointless.

Now let's compare the views of Ayoub with Hick's first approach. It is clear that Ayoub, as a Muslim, agrees that God "is a God of love who wishes the guidance and salvation of" all human beings<sup>1089</sup>, but he does not arrive at the same conclusion as Hick. For Ayoub the mercy of God does not imply that all religions are true. In other words, God is merciful and His mercifulness, according to the principle of grace (*lutf*), implies that He sends the truth through His Prophets. Ayoub, as mentioned before, maintains that the *fitrah*, as an inner guide, can show the Truth, but it can be weakened by obeying the "carnal soul",<sup>1090</sup> and therefore, it is "incumbent upon God" to send Prophets in order to warn man "against heedlessness and disobedience".<sup>1091</sup> For Ayoub, in contrast to Hick, the mercifulness of God implies that He should send His Prophets to convey the true message.

Thus, in contrast to Hick, Ayoub does not accept the validity of non-revealed religions. According to the Qur'anic perspective, as Ayoub claims, the true religion

---

<sup>1084</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 122.

<sup>1085</sup> Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005".

<sup>1086</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 122. See also; Hick, "Foreword." vi.

<sup>1087</sup> Hick, *Philosophy of Religion*. 117-8.

<sup>1088</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*. 140.

<sup>1089</sup> Ayoub, "Roots of Muslim-Christian." 45.

<sup>1090</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 22. See also; Ayoub, "The Word of God and the Voices." 62.

<sup>1091</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 31.

should be “based only on the revelation” of God.<sup>1092</sup> This means that those traditions which are not rooted in revelation cannot be classified as true religions. He asserts that the “ultimate legitimacy” of Judaism and Christianity is based on revelation.<sup>1093</sup> God is merciful but, man, in order to reach salvation, should cling to the prophetic messages sent by Him. Hence, as opposed to Hick, the non-revealed religions are not valid in the eyes of Ayoub.

Moreover, Ayoub’s view does not correspond with Hick’s epistemological approach. He does not believe that different views regarding religions stem from different understandings of Reality. He maintains that the Abrahamic religions enjoy much in common. However, there are also some dissimilarities between them which can be classified into two kinds: contradictory and non-contradictory. Referring to the Qur’an,<sup>1094</sup> Ayoub holds that the contradictory teachings of revealed religions arise from alteration.<sup>1095</sup> As for the non-contradictory differences, he believes that they are natural and are the consequence of diversity in languages and races.<sup>1096</sup>

As we see, Hick and Ayoub present two different arguments for the dissimilar teachings of religions. While the root of dissimilarities for Hick, as explained before, is different religious experiences of the believers, for Ayoub, it is a sign of the wisdom of God in the “ordering of human society”.<sup>1097</sup> Ayoub does not accept different religious experiences for Prophets since he believes that the Prophet received the religious teachings in explicit words of God.<sup>1098</sup> It means that he did not receive them via religious experiences; the words that the Prophet conveyed to the Muslims “were not his own, but were revealed to him by God”.<sup>1099</sup> He emphasises that the “Qur’an is the word of God”.<sup>1100</sup> For Ayoub, therefore, revelation is not a religious experience in which the Prophet had an encounter with God, after which he interpreted and explained what he comprehended in his own words. Perhaps this is the reason why Adnan Aslan claims that “the ‘experience of God’ sounds quite odd

<sup>1092</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 23;

<sup>1093</sup> Ayoub, "One God and Many Faiths." 52; Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 39.

<sup>1094</sup> *The Qur'an*. 4:46.

<sup>1095</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 101.

<sup>1096</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 188-9.

<sup>1097</sup> *Ibid.* 188-9.

<sup>1098</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 40.

<sup>1099</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>1100</sup> Ayoub, "The Qur'an in Muslim Life." 19.

to the Muslim ear”. He states that the religious experience, as “experience or comprehension of God by *human mental endeavour*,” is inconsistent with “the mainstream Islamic concept of God”.<sup>1101</sup>

In sum, Ayoub agrees with Hick that God is the God of love but insists that He presents true religions only through His Prophets. Moreover, Hick builds his argument on the concept of religious experience and holds that the diversity of beliefs is the result of different conceptions of the One Reality. On the contrary, Ayoub maintains that the diversity of beliefs is a natural phenomenon and is the will of God.

### **6.9.2 Javadi and Other Exclusivists**

Exclusivism holds that there is only one true religion and all other religions are (partly or totally) false. However, it should be noted that the Christian and Muslim exclusivists’ arguments are different in two respects: that is, validity and salvation of other faiths.

The Christian exclusivists maintain that salvation can be achieved “only by a divine act of grace”. If we find “where God has truly revealed his unique purposes, it would be folly to” look “elsewhere for salvation”.<sup>1102</sup> God, as Barth states, has one revelation only: Christ—and it is impossible to reach truth and salvation without him.<sup>1103</sup> Two things are worth mentioning here. First, the theological argument for Christian exclusivists is God’s revelation in a specific person, that is, in Jesus Christ. Second, even the sincere believers of other religions cannot achieve salvation since they do not believe in Christ. It shows that there is a necessary relation between the true religion and salvation.

Javadi’s argument, as a sort of Muslim exclusivist, is different. Firstly, he does not establish his argument for the validity of Islam on the revelation of God in the person of Muhammad. God, Javadi states, does not reveal himself in persons or in things,

---

<sup>1101</sup> Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. 65.

<sup>1102</sup> Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 222.

<sup>1103</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 119-20. See also; Kraemer, *Why Christianity of All Religions?* 79, 93 and 117.

rather, He manifested Himself in His Book.<sup>1104</sup> For Javadi, the reason for validity of Islam is its comprehensiveness. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad in comparison to the previous Prophets are more complete.<sup>1105</sup> Each prophet had a *shari'ah* and method, but the culmination of these *shari'ahs* has been gathered in Muhammad's *shari'ah*.<sup>1106</sup> Javadi concludes that, based on the rule of reason, only the most comprehensive *shari'ah* must be valid. In other words, whoever follows the non-comprehensive religions goes against the verdict of human intellect.<sup>1107</sup>

Secondly, Javadi in contrast to Christian exclusivists, holds that salvation does not depend exclusively on following the true religion. It means that the sincere believers of other religions will not be punished on the condition that they, due to incapability, cannot find the true religion. Their incapability can be due to incapacity or lack of knowledge.<sup>1108</sup> For Javadi, there is not a necessary corollary between the true religion and salvation.

In sum, Javadi maintains that Islam is the only true religion. Contrary to Christian exclusivist, he holds that the validity of Islam is not based on the revelation of God in a specific person; rather, it is due to its comprehensiveness. Moreover, the followers of other religions who are not able to find and follow the true religion will be saved.

## 6.10 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to critically compare and analyse the views of Javadi and Ayoub on religious diversity and find out why and how they reached different conclusions. This chapter first compared the cultural, educational and academic backgrounds of the two thinkers which were influential in their different views and conclusions. It then analysed the classifications of religion in the eyes of two thinkers. In the course of human history, so many beliefs and practices have been adopted by mankind in such a way that presenting even a partial list of them is impractical. There are many classifications for these beliefs and practices which are

<sup>1104</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2. 148. For the hadith, see; Al-Radi, *Nahj al-Balaghah*. 267.

<sup>1105</sup> Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 286.

<sup>1106</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 21. 374-5; Javadi, *Intizar-i Bashar*. 178.

<sup>1107</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 6. 220.

<sup>1108</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 232; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 736;



usually named religion. Ayoub and Javadi categorise religions, in terms of their founders, into revealed and non-revealed religions. They maintain that the founder of a religion is either God or a human being, making for a revealed religion or a non-revealed one, respectively. The reason for preferring such a classification is that, in their view, God and revelation play a determinative role in the structure of religions.

While highly different and incompatible definitions have been offered for religion, Ayoub and Javadi offer similar definitions for it. They attempt to propose a definition which addresses both the substantial and the functional aspects of religions. In their view, religion is a system of beliefs, ethics, laws and rules (*shari'ah*) which lead human beings towards salvation.

Both thinkers hold that the non-revealed religions, due to the fallibility of their founders, cannot be reliable. They, however, attempt to address their invalidity from different perspectives. While Ayoub adopts a Qur'anic approach in his discussion, Javadi assumes a rational approach to prove their invalidity.

The teachings of the revealed religions can be classified into two types: religious beliefs and religious practices (*shari'ah*). In terms of religious beliefs, both thinkers attempt to foreground their similarities. Ayoub, however, due to his long experience, plays an efficient role in this area. Both thinkers maintain that the rationale for the similarity of religious beliefs stems from the human being's immutable *fitrah*. In other words, the permanent *fitrah* accounts for the similar religious beliefs. For Javadi, Prophet Muhammad, therefore, did not propose new principles or opinions, but rather merely clarified the previous religious beliefs. The religious beliefs cannot be changed or abrogated, although the religious beliefs of each Prophet, in comparison with the previous ones may be more precise.

In the realm of religious practices (*shari'ah*), there are many similarities and some differences among the revealed religions. Both thinkers agree upon the naturalness of dissimilarity. The diversity of the revealed *shari'ahs*, according to Ayoub, is the result of the variety of cultures, races and languages. This diversity is the will of God and a sign of "divine wisdom". Javadi presents different views and holds that the central principles of revealed religious practices, due to the immutable *fitrah* of man,

cannot be changed or abrogated. However, the forms and details of religious practices of the previous *shari'ah*, due to the conditions of the time and place, can be subjected to abrogation.

Ayoub maintains that Islam did not abrogate the previous *shari'ahs*. He argues that Prophet Muhammad did not command the Jews and Christians to abandon their own *shari'ahs* and embrace his *shari'ah*. Rather, they were asked to accept him as one of the divine Prophets. Javadi, on the contrary, holds that Islam abrogated the previous religious laws. He states that good deeds, in order to be acceptable to God, should be performed according to the new *shari'ah*. For Javadi, the previous *shari'ahs*, therefore, are not valid.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, in order to evaluate the standpoints of Ayoub and Javadi on the diversity of religions, it is necessary to address the issue from both rational and Qur'anic perspectives. Having discussed the rational approach, the next chapter aims to address it from the Qur'anic point of view.

## 7 Chapter Seven: Comparative Analysis of Javadi's and Ayoub's Qur'anic Approaches to Religious Diversity

### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the analytical arguments of Ayoub and Javadi on religious diversity. This chapter aims to study their Qur'anic perspectives on the question of religious diversity. It will first refer to Javadi's and Ayoub's interpretations of verse 2:62 as one of the most cited verses in this respect. In the second step, the two interpretations will be closely examined and evaluated. Finally, one other variant interpretation of the verse will be given to see how other contemporary Shi'ah scholars understand the verse. For this purpose, the views of Ayatollah Sobhani have been chosen, who like Javadi, was a student of Tabataba'i.

Since the Qur'an is the most sacred text in Islam, both Muslim exclusivists and pluralists have tried to resort to it in order to prove their particular viewpoints. Qur'anic verses and Islamic narrations refer to the People of the Book from two perspectives, namely, jurisprudential and theological. From the jurisprudential standpoint, the rules and rights of the People of the Book have been considered. The Qur'an, for instance, refers to the duty of Muslims regarding their dietary rules and marriage laws in the verse "the food of those who were given the Book is lawful to you, and your food is lawful to them and the chaste ones from among faithful women, and chaste women of those who were given the Book before you".<sup>1109</sup> The question of ritual purity of their food and the legality of marriage of Muslim men with their women are amongst the jurisprudential issues discussed by Muslim jurists in the interpretation of this verse. From the theological perspective, their views regarding God, monotheism<sup>1110</sup>, prophets<sup>1111</sup>, life after death<sup>1112</sup> and the like are addressed.<sup>1113</sup>

---

<sup>1109</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:5.

<sup>1110</sup> See; *ibid.* 5: 17, 72-73; 4:171

<sup>1111</sup> See; *ibid.* 9:30; 5:75.

<sup>1112</sup> See; *ibid.* 7:146-7; 10:88; 40:27, 32.

<sup>1113</sup> It should be noted that the theological principles of religion, such as unity, prophethood, justice etc., are given a more comprehensive treatment in the Qur'an than jurisprudential issues and, therefore, a significant portion of the Qur'anic verses is devoted to these principles.

## 7.2 Verse 2:62 and the People of the Book

A very important verse with theological implications in this respect is verse 2:62, which says “Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve”. Verse 5:69 closely resembles the above verse although they have been revealed at different times. The interpretation of 2:62, as McAuliffe states, “has been developed” over the centuries by Muslim exegetes.<sup>1114</sup> It should be noted that, since this verse is one of the most quoted in pluralistic discourses, it has always been given serious attention by Muslim exegetes. The aim of this section is to address and compare the perspectives of Javadi and Ayoub about this controversial verse.

## 7.3 Ayatollah Javadi’s Interpretation

In order to be able to interpret any verse in the Qur’an, exegetes usually have to confront and address some essential questions, such as the meaning of each word, its etymology and its old and present usages; the structure of the sentence, its syntax and its purport; the context of revelation (*sha’n-i nuzul*), that is to say, when and why the verse was revealed; the logical connection between the verse and the preceding and the following verses in the chapter; other verses that may cast light upon this verse; and the exegetical narrations which may clarify the meaning of the verse. Also, they have to verify if the verse was abrogated or if it abrogated any other verse. Answering to these questions will help exegetes to uncover the intended meaning of any verse.

Javadi, like other exegetes, begins his commentary with a brief description of Jews, Christians and Sabaeans. In order to interpret verse 2:62, he tries to place it in the context and makes use of the previous verses. The text begins with an account of the Jewish history and how the Jews had shown very bad behaviour towards their own messengers in the past. The Qur’an gives an account of this history starting in verse

---

<sup>1114</sup> McAuliffe, *Qur’anic Christians*. 93.

2:40. The children of Israel were under terrible torment from Pharaoh, who slaughtered their sons.<sup>1115</sup> God sent Moses to save them from the chastisement of Pharaoh and to take them to their promised land. However, despite having seen Moses' many miracles and being delivered from persecution, they doubted his prophethood. The Qur'an consequently describes them as being an obdurate and quarrelsome people. They would persist in denying God's signs, killing the prophets and being transgressors of divine laws.<sup>1116</sup> Due to their ungracious behaviour, they were punished with "abasement".<sup>1117</sup>

Javadi, having considered the previous verses, tries to find out the context of the revelation (*sha'n-i nuzul*) of the verse under discussion. He contends that seemingly some Jews thought that, after the appearance of Islam, due to the disobedience of their ancestors in the past and the ensuing humiliation, the gate of salvation had been absolutely closed to them. The Qur'an, in order to respond to their doubts, elucidates the reality that "the gate of salvation is not closed to them and that the humiliation which was destined for them" can be removed by their accepting the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>1118</sup> Therefore, the verse was revealed to relieve the anguish of those Jews who were concerned about their past wrongs. Javadi, unlike other commentators, does not refer to the narrations which narrate the cause of revelation for the verse; he rather prefers to find it out from the context itself.

Based on the verse, he states that the path of salvation depends on two conditions, which are true belief and good deeds in accordance with the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad. A Jew cannot be deprived of the ultimate salvation because of being Jewish and bearing the stamp of humiliation in the past. He also contends that even a Muslim cannot be saved without good deeds. This verse, Javadi claims, addressed the People of the Book at the time of Prophet Muhammad and told them "if you want to attain the ultimate felicity, you have to believe in God, and the day of Judgement and fulfil righteous deeds, according to the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad".<sup>1119</sup> He adds that, although the structure of the sentence in the verse is in declarative, it gives

---

<sup>1115</sup> *The Qur'an*.2:49.

<sup>1116</sup> *Ibid.* 2:61.

<sup>1117</sup> *Ibid.* 2:61.

<sup>1118</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 35,62.

<sup>1119</sup> *Ibid.* 35- 6.

the effect of the imperative and actually orders the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans living at the time of the Prophet to perform religious rulings according to the teachings of Islam.<sup>1120</sup> This means that God does not deprive anybody because of their dark past; rather, they can attain salvation on the condition that they should carry out good deeds according to Islam.

It is clear that Javadi gives an exclusivist interpretation of the verse. The question arises as to how he has deduced such a restrictive meaning while the literal and the apparent meaning of the verse could evoke a pluralistic image. According to the literal meaning, the Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans can be saved without any conditions as long as they perform good deeds. In other words, the verse does not state that if they perform good deeds according to Prophet Muhammad's teachings, they would be saved. Javadi believes that there are two pieces of evidence that lead him to such an interpretation. The first is the context; he does not consider verse 2:62 alone but tries to discover its meaning by considering the preceding verses, especially verse 2:40. The logical relation between verse 2:62 and the previous verses is an essential factor to consider in the science of *tafsir* (interpretation).

The second evidence, which convinces him about such a reading, is the phrase "good deeds" in the verse. He claims that "good deeds" does not refer to actions performed according to the previous *shari'ahs*, but rather, it denotes the good deeds carried out according to the rules of Prophet Muhammad's *shari'ah*. He adds that the Qur'an does not allude explicitly to a definition of good deeds but refers to its forms and examples, such as prayers and fasting.<sup>1121</sup> According to the forms and examples that appear in the Qur'an and hadiths, Javadi then attempts to define it. A good deed is "every act which is informed through the divine revelation, intellect and pure primordial nature (*fitrah*)".<sup>1122</sup> Javadi, in the light of this definition, maintains that the acceptance of a good deed depends on two conditions. First, "it should be based on true and unabrogated revelation"<sup>1123</sup>; and second the agent of the action should be

---

<sup>1120</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 226.

<sup>1121</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 10. 491.

<sup>1122</sup> Ibid., 5. 67. Al-Tusi also refers to such definition. Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 3. 405.

<sup>1123</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 73-4, 30. See also; *ibid.*, 2. 61; *ibid.*, 6. 182; 'Abdullah Javadi, *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*, vol. 15 (Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009). 334, 340; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 20. 524, 529; *ibid.*, 22. 215; Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 225; Javadi, *Qur'an-i Karim az Manzar*. 140

a believer. For Javadi, therefore, after the appearance of Islam, deeds are deemed good only if they are accomplished according to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.<sup>1124</sup>

Javadi, based on these two conditions, concludes that a non-believer (*kafir*) will be deprived of God's reward on the Day of Judgement for two reasons. Firstly, he did not attempt to perform his religious acts based on the present *shari'ah*. Secondly, even if his religious acts were performed according to the present *shari'ah*, due to incorrect beliefs, he cannot receive a reward for it.<sup>1125</sup>

For Javadi, ultimate salvation depends on both the goodness of the act (*husn-i fi'li*) and the goodness of the agent (*husn-i fa'ili*).<sup>1126</sup> He claims that the verse under discussion never refers to those People of the Book who do not accept the true religion and do not accept the prophethood of Muhammad. This verse, therefore, cannot be used to prove "religious pluralism".<sup>1127</sup> In other words, the goodness of act is missing here.

Javadi simply reiterates his own exclusivist understanding with a brief explanation in his commentary on verse 5:65, which resembles the verse under discussion. He explicitly states that any religious act which is performed in accordance with Prophet Muhammad's teachings is named a "good deed". Therefore, the phrase "good deeds" does not refer to abrogated religious acts.<sup>1128</sup>

Considering these points, it can be concluded that Javadi offers an exclusivist reading of verse 2:62. He does not see the verse as an endorsement of pluralism. He takes the meaning of the verse to be a redress for those Jews who did not see any possible way for their salvation. It tells them that the gates of ultimate salvation, seemingly barred to them because of their bad treatment of their Prophets in the past, is not closed to them and even the stamp of previous humiliation, which was destined for them, can be removed if they accept Prophet Muhammad and perform good deeds in

---

<sup>1124</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 5. 40.

<sup>1125</sup> Ibid. 73-4.

<sup>1126</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>1127</sup> Ibid. 30-1.

<sup>1128</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 23. 316-21; Javadi, *Tasnim*, 14. 404, 733.

accordance with his teachings. He clearly claims that this verse cannot prove religious pluralism, or validity of previous *shari'ahs*.

#### 7.4 Professor Ayoub's Interpretation

Ayoub, in contrast to Javadi, gives a pluralistic reading of this verse. He maintains that the verse clearly shows that there are only two conditions for salvation. He states, "the only common elements it insists on are sincere faith in God and works of righteousness". These two criteria are so significant for the salvation of man that the verse was revealed twice, once at the beginning and again at the end of Muhammad's prophetic mission, nearly verbatim. Their meanings are clear and unequivocal. He adds that *iman* (faith) in the verse in question is "more than a mere religious label". It is not simply a title for a specific group.<sup>1129</sup>

In the introduction of his *tafsir*, Ayoub explains that *iman* is not simply "*belief* as an indifferent act of acquiescence". It is rather a 'dynamic commitment', a dedication which requires a person to "make the ultimate sacrifice of life". That is why he regards it as the ultimate criterion for salvation when it is matched with good deeds. He acknowledges that for such a notion of faith, he is indebted to his teacher, Smith.<sup>1130</sup> As we saw before, Smith regards faith as a living relation to the transcendent and as a "personal confrontation with the splendour and the love of God".<sup>1131</sup>

As such, Ayoub identifies "a genuine religious identity" in the verse. It teaches us that a genuine religious identity depends on two elements, that is, practice of the divine scripture and belief in God. Based on what has been said, Ayoub asserts that the Christians and Jews "represent the first criterion as people of the Book".<sup>1132</sup> For Ayoub, therefore, if the followers of the revealed religions believe in God and the Day of Judgement and perform good deeds, they will have their rewards in the Hereafter. This means that there is no need for them to abandon their own religions and embrace the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. The core message of pluralism is

---

<sup>1129</sup> Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21. See also; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14.

<sup>1130</sup> Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, 1. 40.

<sup>1131</sup> Smith, *The Meaning*. 29.

<sup>1132</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 34.



that the followers of major religions can attain salvation. This implies the validity of the other major religions.<sup>1133</sup> The verse, according to Ayoub, aims to prove the legitimacy of previous religions and, consequently, the plurality of the ways to salvation.

Ayoub, however, laments the fact that some commentators have attempted to limit the pluralistic and universal implications of the verse. Criticising such interpretations, he says that some maintain that this verse has been abrogated (*mansukh*) and some admit “the universality of the verse until the coming of Islam, but thereafter” they restrict “its applicability only to those who hold the faith of Islam”.<sup>1134</sup> Ayoub, however, argues against these two restrictive approaches and refutes both the idea of abrogation and of limited universality as follows.

#### **a- Abrogation**

The first restrictive interpretation is that this verse has been abrogated. Ayoub does not point to the advocates of abrogation and how or which verse may be considered as an abrogator (*nasikh*). However, al-Tusi and al-Tabrasi ascribe the opinion about the abrogation to ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas. The abrogating verse, in his view, is verse 3:85, which reads “should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter”.<sup>1135</sup>

Ayoub does not accept the idea of abrogation for two reasons. First, the idea of abrogation should be rejected because the verse in question is not a “legislative but a narrative statement”.<sup>1136</sup> It is unanimously accepted that abrogation is exclusively applicable to religious rulings not beliefs. In other words, only the religious rulings (*shari‘ahs*) of previous religions, such as the quality and quantity of prayers, can be

<sup>1133</sup> Some contemporary Muslim scholars present the same argument. See; Aydin, "Religious Pluralism." 346-7; Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 48; Baha al-Din Khurramshahi, "Qur'an va Ilahiyat-i Jahani," *Bayyinat* 17 (1998). 176; Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*. 43; Sachedina, *the Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. 39.

<sup>1134</sup> Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, 1. 110. See also; Aslan, *Religious Pluralism*. 194. Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 48-9.

<sup>1135</sup> Al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan*, 1. 260; Muhammad Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 10 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988). 284-5.

<sup>1136</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 203.

changed and abrogated. Al-Tusi and al-Tabrasi also rejecting Ibn 'Abbas's claim, referred to this answer.<sup>1137</sup>

Second, Ayoub argues that verse 2:62 was revealed at the beginning of Prophet Muhammad's mission in Medina in order to deal with the "Jewish tribes" and the "Christian community of Najran". At the end of his prophetic career, verse 2:62 was repeated nearly verbatim and unequivocally in 5:68 again. The question might arise as to which one of these two verses might have been abrogated.<sup>1138</sup> Mahmut Aydin clearly illustrates what Ayoub means. Aydin argues, "suppose the first one, 2:62, was abrogated, then the second one, 5:69, still stands. If it had been abrogated already", why did God send it again?<sup>1139</sup> If the second one, 5:69, was abrogated, it is clear that God would not have abrogated a verse that was revealed at the end of the Prophet's mission. Ayoub concludes that "neither the words nor the purport of these two identical verses was abrogated".<sup>1140</sup>

As has already been shown, Ayoub does not refer to the abrogating verse (*nasikh*). The followers of the abrogation theory usually believe that 3:85, "should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him",<sup>1141</sup> as attributed to Ibn Abbas, has abrogated 2:62. It is clear that for Ayoub verse 3:85 cannot be the abrogator of the verse under discussion, because, according to him, the term "*islam*" in the Qur'an is not merely a title for the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. As Ayoub explains, the term "*islam*" has two meanings in the Qur'an. The first refers to the "framework within which Allah created the universe".<sup>1142</sup> This means that the whole universe is obeying the "laws of nature" which Allah granted them as *muslims*. The verse "to Him submits whoever there is in the heavens and the earth"<sup>1143</sup> denotes the "first and universal" usage of "*islam*".<sup>1144</sup>

The other meaning of *islam* in the Qur'an is employed for all those who embrace His commands and authority. *Islam* should thus be understood as the religion of the

---

<sup>1137</sup> Al-Tabarsi, *Majma' al-Bayan*, 1. 260; Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 1. 284-5.

<sup>1138</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 113.

<sup>1139</sup> Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 48-9.

<sup>1140</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 113.

<sup>1141</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3: 85.

<sup>1142</sup> Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 21.

<sup>1143</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:83.

<sup>1144</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 114; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and Practice*. 21.

divine Prophets, like Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.<sup>1145</sup> According to this viewpoint, the term “*islam*” denotes not only the teachings of Prophet Muhammad but also the teachings of all the revealed Prophets. The followers of Moses and Jesus are, therefore, called *muslims*.<sup>1146</sup> These two meanings were explained in detail in the previous chapters.

Having said that, it can be concluded that verse 3:85 cannot abrogate verse 2:62 since according to such an understanding, the Jews and Christians, like the followers of Prophet Muhammad, are also considered to be *muslims*. These three pieces of evidence weaken the claims for the abrogation of verses 2:62 and 5:69. It is worth mentioning that Ayoub not only believes that verses 2:62 and 5:69 were not abrogated but also holds that the “inclusive view of abrogation has no clear Qur’anic basis, nor has it been universally accepted”.<sup>1147</sup>

It should be noted that usually contemporary Muslim commentators, even those giving an exclusivist reading of verse 2:62, do not believe in the abrogation of this verse. The term abrogation was used to convey a much wider meaning among ancient scholars compared to its restricted meaning in later times. The early scholars used it not only to denote the removal of the ruling of a verse by another verse, but also for the qualification, delimitation and specification of a verse by another verse.<sup>1148</sup> Hence, when a case of abrogation is reported from Ibn ‘Abbas it necessarily does not mean the removal of the ruling. Ibn ‘Abbas, as one of the greatest scholars of the Qur’an, naturally knew that a verse that was revealed at the end of the prophetic mission could not have been abrogated by an earlier verse. What Ibn ‘Abbas meant was probably that verse 3:85 could be evidence for the interpretation of the verse in question. In other words, as some verses cast light upon other verses, verse 3:85 illuminates the meaning of verse 2:62 but not as an abrogator (*nasikh*). Therefore, verse 2:62, according to Ibn ‘Abbas, aims to depict, in light of

---

<sup>1145</sup> Ayoub, "Islam and Pluralism." 114-5.

<sup>1146</sup> Ibid. 114-5. Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 10; Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*. 11. Ayoub, "Islam and Christianity: Between." 33; Ayoub, "The Islamic Tradition." 342.

<sup>1147</sup> Ayoub, "Nearest in Amity." 193; Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 18.

<sup>1148</sup> Muhammad Hadi Ma‘rifat, *Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur’an*, trans. Mansur Limba and Salim Rossier, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Tehran: Samt, 2014). 246.

verse 3:85, the destiny of the People of the Book before Islam. It is obvious that such a justification cannot be considered as abrogation.<sup>1149</sup>

### **b- Limited Universality**

The second restrictive interpretation of verse 2:62 is that the verse clarifies only the fate of those who were living before Islam. This means that if sincere Jews and Christians before Islam believed in God and performed good deeds, they will be saved.<sup>1150</sup> The verse, therefore, does not refer to the validity of those religions after Islam. Rejecting this view, Ayoub criticizes some classical commentators who attempted to limit the “universal application” of the verse by clinging to the hadith of Salman Farsi.<sup>1151</sup> Salman at the beginning was a Zoroastrian. One day he encountered a monk who was reading the Gospel and weeping. Having been impressed by him, Salman became a Christian. The monk told him about a future prophet who would be sent by God but since he was old and would not have the chance to see him, he wished for Salman to be able to see him. In order to find the promised prophet, Salman moved to Mecca, and after finding him, accepted Islam. One day he told Prophet Muhammad the story of the late pious monk who was waiting for his appearance and inquired about his fate after death. The Prophet replied that the monk would be in fire. This answer created a grievous pain in Salman’s heart. To console him, God revealed the verse in question.<sup>1152</sup> Therefore, according to this hadith, verse 2:62 applies to the believers’ life before the

<sup>1149</sup> For the biography of Ibn ‘Abbas see; Ibn Hajar Al-‘Asqalani, *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*, 8 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 1994). 121-131; Muhammad Ibn Athir, *Usd al-Ghabah fi Ma‘rifah al-Sahabah*, 5 vols., vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya’ al-Kutub al-‘Arabi, n.d). 192-5; Muhammad Al-Dhahabi, *Siyar A‘lam al-Nubala’*, 23 vols., vol. 3 (Beirut: al-Risalah, 1992).331-59; Ahmad Al-Baladhuri, *Ansab al-Ashraf*, 13 vols., vol. 4 (Beirut: Jam‘iyyah al-Mustashriqin al-Almaniyyah, 1978). 27-55. For English references see; also Andrew Rippin, "Ibn ‘Abbas's al-Lughat fi al-Qur‘an," in *The Qur‘an Formative Interpretation*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999). Andrew Rippin, "Ibn ‘Abbas's Gharib al-Qur‘an " in *The Qur‘an Formative Interpretation*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

<sup>1150</sup> For the advocator of such interpretation see, Qutb, *Fi Zilal al-Qur‘an*, 1. 75-6; Al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma‘ani*, 1. 379; Nasir Makarim, *Tafsir-i Nimunih*, 27 vols., vol. 1 (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1995). 274.

<sup>1151</sup> Ayoub, *The Qur‘an and its Interpreters*, 1. 110-12.

<sup>1152</sup> Muhammad Al-Tabari, *Jami‘ al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur‘an*, 30 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma‘rifah, 1991). 254-6.

appearance of Islam and does not point to the validity of the previous religions after Islam.

Ayoub is right that this hadith cannot limit the pluralistic approach to verse 2:62; however, he does not suggest any reason for it. Nevertheless, based on all standards of hadith evaluation, he could have provided many reasons from the Islamic perspective for it. The first reason is that its chain of transmission is extremely weak by all standards of hadith authentication. It suffers from *irsal* (broken chain). One of the important criteria of the authenticity of any hadith is that the narrator (*rawi*) should narrate it directly from the main sources, that is, the Prophet or Imams. Suddi, the narrator of this hadith, does not narrate it directly from the Prophet, but he has heard it from someone who had heard it from the Prophet. Suddi, however, does not mention who the reporter was.<sup>1153</sup> This type of hadith is named *mursal* and is considered, in the eyes of transmitters of hadith, to be of limited value.<sup>1154</sup>

Secondly, its content is defective and in opposition to some Qur'anic verses.<sup>1155</sup> It is universally accepted, in the science of narrators (*'ilm al-rijal*), that for a hadith to be recognized as correct it should not be against any axiom from the Qur'an.<sup>1156</sup> The hadith of Salman, is in contradiction to well-established Qur'anic concepts. For example, according to the verse "nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him]",<sup>1157</sup> the Prophet, in order to convey the true message, was protected.<sup>1158</sup> As 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (d.1661) states, the Prophet used to wait for the commands of God via revelation in any religious affairs and never expressed his own personal ideas.<sup>1159</sup> All in all, the hadith is an expostulation of the Prophet; it regards him as a man of crude sense and understanding, and this

---

<sup>1153</sup> Al-Wahidi refers that the hadith of Salman is *mursal*. Ali Al-Wahidi, *Asbab Nuzul al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990). 28-9.

<sup>1154</sup> Zayn al-Din Al-Shahid al-Thani, *al-Ri'ayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah* (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1987). 136; Husein Ibn 'Abd al-Samad, *Wusul al-Akhbar ila Usul al-Akhbar* (Qum: Majma' al-Dhakha'ir al-Islamiyyah, 1980). 106.

<sup>1155</sup> See, *The Qur'an*. 53:39; 16:97; 31:22; 4:125; 18:7, 30.

<sup>1156</sup> Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, 2. 222; Muhammad Hurr al-'Amili, *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, 30 vols., vol. 27 (Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-bayt, 1988). 110-2; Muhammad Baqir Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 111 vols., vol. 50 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982). 80.

<sup>1157</sup> *The Qur'an*. 54:3-4.

<sup>1158</sup> Al-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad*. 155; Sa'd al-Din Al-Taftazani, *Sharh al-Maqasid*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (Beirut: Sharif al-Radi, n.d). 50.

<sup>1159</sup> Lahiji, *Guhar-i Murad*. 461.

goes against the right judgement (*hukm*) in matters of faith that God has given His prophets.<sup>1160</sup>

In addition to all the above, there is another problem with the hadith of Salman which renders it vague and equivocal. The hadith suffers from what is technically called *idtirab* (perplexity). If one incident is described in two or more hadiths in different contradictory ways, the hadith is labelled as *mudtarib* (perplexed).<sup>1161</sup> In the case of this incident, some narrations say that when Salman related the story of the late pious monk, the Prophet said, “he will be in the fire”.<sup>1162</sup> Another version of the hadith has it that when Salam told the story of the monk to the Prophet, someone else said “he will be in the fire”.<sup>1163</sup> According to another version, as soon as Salman told the story, verse 2:62 was revealed.<sup>1164</sup> As it can be seen in the third narration, nobody told Salman that “he will be in the fire”. These different and contradictory descriptions invalidate the authenticity of the hadith. Such a hadith, which is *mudtarib*, is considered weak by the scholars of hadith.<sup>1165</sup>

Javadi raises another objection to the hadith. He believes that if we want to interpret verse 2:62 in the light of the hadith of Salman and conclude that the verse refers to those Jews and Christians who believed in God and performed good deeds before Islam, although it is theologically true, the verse does not directly refer to this fact. He argues that, since the Qur'an is a book of guidance for all nations, it does not try to decide the fate of previous nations. It intends instead to depict the way in which the people at the time of Prophet Muhammad and the following generations could attain salvation and enter paradise.<sup>1166</sup> Therefore, the verse does not concern the destiny of Jews and Christians before Islam but rather aims to show the way to felicity to the people of the Book after Islam.

---

<sup>1160</sup> *The Qur'an*. 6:89.

<sup>1161</sup> Al-Shahid al-Thani, *al-Ri'ayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah*. 146-8; Ja'far Sobhani, *'Ilm al-Dirayah* (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1993). 117-8.

<sup>1162</sup> Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur*, 6 vols., vol. 1 (Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1983). 74-5.

<sup>1163</sup> Makarim, *Tafsir-i Nimunih*, 1. 286-7.

<sup>1164</sup> Isma'il Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, 9 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998). 182.

<sup>1165</sup> Husein 'Abdullah Mar'i, *Muntaha al-Maqal fi 'Il al-Dirayah wa al-Rijal* (Beirut: 'Urwah al-Wuthqa, 1996). 705.

<sup>1166</sup> Javadi, *Din Shinasi*. 226.

In the light of what has been mentioned above it can be concluded that the hadith of Salman is not reliable in the eyes of the scholars of hadith. It, therefore, cannot limit the pluralistic approach to verse 2:62. Some Qur'anic exegetes, however, mention this hadith without referring to its weakness.<sup>1167</sup>

## 7.5 Evaluating the Views of Javadi and Ayoub

As it has been shown, Ayoub and Javadi have produced two different and contradictory readings of verse 2:62. The primary reason for such different interpretations may stem from the ambiguous nature of the verse. But is the verse equivocal (*mutashabih*) to the extent that it allows interpretations in favour of both Islamic exclusivism and Islamic pluralism? If that is the case, how can an exegete remove the ambiguity and uncover the point of the verse?

The Qur'an has provided us with a clear method to deal with equivocal verses. According to the verse "It is He who has sent down to you the Book. Parts of it are definitive verses (*muhkamat*), which are the mother of the Book, while others are equivocal (*mutashabihat*),"<sup>1168</sup> Qur'anic verses can be classified under two headings: definite (*muhkamat*) and equivocal (*mutashabihat*). The *muhkamat* are those verses whose intended meaning can be understood from the verse itself. This means that the exegete does not need any indication or assistance from other verses or hadiths. The *mutashabihat* are those verses which can signify more than one meaning. As a result, the reader cannot derive the intended meaning, but rather needs to find clues and indications from other verses or hadiths.<sup>1169</sup> For instance, the verse "Some faces will be fresh on that day looking (*nazirah*) at their Lord"<sup>1170</sup> is one of the *mutashabihat*, where the active participle *nazirah* may signify *looking* or *awaiting*. The verse itself cannot show its intended meaning. Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, the founder of the school of Ash'ariyyah, refers to the verse to show that God can be seen by eyes on

<sup>1167</sup> Al-Wahidi, *Asbab Nuzul*. 28; Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manthur*, 1. 74-5; Muhammad Al-Undulusi, *al-Bahr al-Muhit fi al-Tafsir*, 11 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1999). 389.

<sup>1168</sup> *The Qur'an*. 3:7.

<sup>1169</sup> Al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, 2. 395. Tabataba'i narrates sixteen definitions for the *muhkam* and *mutishah*. Please see; Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1995). 31-42.

<sup>1170</sup> *The Qur'an*. 75:23-4

the Day of Judgment.<sup>1171</sup> For him, the word “*nazirah*” means looking and denotes sensory vision while others hold that this verse should not be considered alone. In order to discover the intended meaning, whether it refers to a sensual or an intuitive vision or it means awaiting the Lord’s reward, one should resort to evidence from other verses.<sup>1172</sup>

Now the important question is how to classify verse 2:62. Is it amongst the *mutashabihat* which can be interpreted as having two or more meanings? As far as I know, nobody has considered the verse in question amongst the *mutashbihat*. As Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifat, a well-known contemporary Qur’anic scholar, states, most of the *mutashabih* verses, concern God’s attributes of beauty (*al-jamal*), majesty (*al-jalal*), the vision of God, free will of man, divine decree (*al-qada*) and measure (*al-qadar*).<sup>1173</sup> Verse 2:62, therefore, should be amongst the *muhkamat* which can lead the reader to only one definite meaning. The question is if it is a definitive verse, why Javadi and Ayoub present two contradictory readings of it.

It seems that this inconsistency derives from their difference in interpretive method. Hence, in order to evaluate the viewpoints of these two thinkers, it is imperative to consider their methods of interpretation. In the science of *tafsir*, an important question amongst the scholars of the Qur’an is the order of the verses and how they relate to one another. Is there any logical connection amongst the verses of every chapter? Does each chapter comprise inconsistent and unrelated issues or do the verses of each chapter convey a specific message or a set of messages in a consistent manner?

---

<sup>1171</sup> Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash’ari, *al-Ibanah ‘an Usul al-Diyanah* (Hydar Abad: al-Nizami, n.d). 13-23. See also; Mir sayyid Sharif Al-Iji, *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, 8 vols., vol. 8 (Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, n.d). 115; Al-Miqdad, *Al-Lawami’*. 167-8; Sayf al-Din Al-Amidi, *Ghayah al-Maram fi ‘Ilm al-Kalam* (Qum: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d). 142-57.

<sup>1172</sup> For short information about *muhkam* and *mutashbih* please see; Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, "The Speaking Qur’an and the Silent Qur’an," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>1173</sup> Muhammad Hadi Ma’rifat, *al-Tamhid fi ‘Ulum al-Qur’an*, 7 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Mu’assasa-yi Farhangi-yi Tamhid, 2007). 13-262.



Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (1445-1505) reports that for the first time Abu Bakr al-Niyshaburi discovered the logical relation between Qur'anic verses.<sup>1174</sup> Amongst the Muslim interpreters, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi devoted much effort to this field.<sup>1175</sup> He states that whoever reflects upon the rhetorical aspect of the second chapter of the Qur'an will realize that it is not only a miracle in terms of eloquence and sublime meaning but also in terms of the order and relation of its verses.<sup>1176</sup> Abu Bakr al-Qadi (1076-1148), a prominent thinker of Maliki School, lays great stress upon the fact that the verses, as al-Suyuti states, were compiled in such a way that it made the whole Qur'an into one word.<sup>1177</sup>

The difference between Javadi and Ayoub in the interpretation of 2:62 lies here. As a student of Tabataba'i and following his method, Javadi believes that the chapters of the Qur'an cannot be a compilation of separate and disjointed verses, but rather a logical continuity exists between the verses of every chapter.<sup>1178</sup> Thus, in his interpretation of the verse in question, he refers to previous verses to explain the phrase "act righteously". Ayoub, however, focuses on the unrestricted nature of the statement (*itlaq*) of the verse itself without considering the verses that go before it. To analyse the views of each of the two, we need to examine their evidence.

Firstly, Javadi explores the meaning of verse 2:62 via the previous verses, which can be considered as the context of revelation (*sha'n-i nuzul*). The previous verses reveal that some among the People of the Book had belligerent attitudes towards their own messengers in the past, so much so that they were stamped with "abasement" by God.<sup>1179</sup> With the appearance of Islam, they maintained that due to their stamp of humiliation, salvation was impossible for them. In order to eliminate any contingent obscurity and doubt, God exposes the reality that "the gate of salvation is not closed for them and the humiliation which was destined for them" can be removed via

<sup>1174</sup> Jalal al-Din Al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996). 288. See also; Muhammad Al-Zarkishi, *al-Burhan*, 4 vols., vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1957). 36.

<sup>1175</sup> Al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, 2. 288.

<sup>1176</sup> Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, 32 vols., vol. 7 (Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999). 106.

<sup>1177</sup> Al-Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, 2. 288.

<sup>1178</sup> Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan*, 1. 16. See also; Javadi, *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i*, 1. 393-5.

<sup>1179</sup> *The Qur'an*. 2:40-61.

embracing the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. This is the first evidence for Javadi's exclusivist reading.

The second and most pivotal evidence for Javadi is the phrase 'good deeds' (*al-ʿamal al-salih*) in the verse. He asserts that, in order to discover the accurate meaning of good deeds, we have to find out the usage of this phrase in the Qur'an. Good deeds in the Qur'an, as he claims, has been used only in the present *shari'ah*. The People of the Book, consequently, will only enter paradise on condition that they act and perform good deeds according to Islam.<sup>1180</sup> Javadi, as we have seen, dismisses any pluralistic perception of verse 2:62 by resorting to these two reasons. It is worth mentioning that this reading does not depend on abrogation, though it implicitly implies that God has abrogated the previous Books.

While these two pieces of evidence persuade Javadi into his exclusivist reading, Ayoub resorts to a different piece of evidence, namely, the unrestricted nature of the statement (*itlaq*) of the verse, to support his pluralistic view. As has been mentioned before, Ayoub holds that God requires two conditions to secure the salvation of the adherents of the revealed Books: to believe in God and to carry out good deeds. Since God does not confine good deeds to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, it implies that any good acts from every *shari'ah* should be acceptable. As we have seen, the phrase "good deeds" plays a major role for both thinkers. For Ayoub, good deeds are absolute (*mutlaq*), whereas, for Javadi they are conditioned (*muqayyad*).

Javadi's view should be credited for two points. First, Javadi does not ignore the context of the verse and the cause of its revelation. Ayoub, in contrast, disregards the context and considers the verse in isolation. Second, Javadi, in order to understand the meaning of "righteous deeds", does not refer to its literal meaning, but rather tries to explore its technical meaning in the Qur'an. Ayoub does not refer to the usage of this word in the Qur'an. These two factors may lend weight to Javadi's interpretation.

However, Javadi's interpretation suffers from lack of thorough research into the phrase "good deeds" in the Qur'an. This phrase, which is mentioned eighty-seven

---

<sup>1180</sup> Javadi, *Tasnim*, 2.61,472; *ibid.*, 20. 524; *ibid.*, 5. 40.

times in different forms in the Qur'an is not always used as good deeds according to the *shari'ah* of Islam. The Qur'an, for instance, states, "whoever acts righteously, it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is to its own detriment".<sup>1181</sup> Since the phrase "good deeds" in this verse is used as the opposite of evil deeds, it can be understood that "good deeds" here refers to a general meaning, that is, what is commanded by God to be carried out.<sup>1182</sup>

To better judge each of the two views, it is important to see what other interpretations are suggested for the verse. Obviously, it is not possible to introduce here all the views suggested by the Shi'ah commentators regarding the verse under discussion. So, we confine ourselves to the views of one of the most influential thinkers, that is, Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani, who was also inspired by Tabataba'i. The selection of Sobhani here is important because it shows that there are differences of opinion regarding this verse even among the scholars in Qum who came from the same background. Sobhani is similar to Javadi in many aspects, including milieu and education. Both have been among the closest students of Tabataba'i and have the same philosophical and theological background.

Sobhani is one of the most prolific contemporary writers. He has written more than two hundred books, covering different aspects of Islamic teachings, such as, law (*fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence, philosophy, theology, history, the science of narration (*ilm al-Rijal* and *al-Dirayah*) and commentary. His works show that he has been interested mostly in theology and intellectual sciences. What makes him more relevant here is that, like Javadi, he studied philosophy including books of *Sharh al-Manzumah* and *Asfar* under Tabataba'i. Sobhani also attended in the private courses of Tabataba'i which were run to rationally defend Islamic beliefs against Marxists and Materialists. He translated Tabataba'i's manuscripts to Arabic in 1959.

In addition to authoring many books on Islamic theology, Sobhani has written extensively on Qur'anic commentary in both thematic interpretation (in fourteen volumes) and sequential interpretation (so far in thirty volumes). His Qur'anic works have been published with forwards by many prominent scholars such as

---

<sup>1181</sup> *The Qur'an*.45:15.

<sup>1182</sup> Sobhani, *Manshur-i Jawid*, 3. 315-6.

Tabataba'i<sup>1183</sup> and Muhammad Jawad Mughniyyah.<sup>1184</sup> In what follows I examine the interpretation suggested by Sobhani.

## 7.6 Ayatollah Sobhani's Interpretation

While Javadi and Ayoub state that verse 2:62 refers to the issue of validity or invalidity of previous *shari'ahs*, Sobhani maintains that the verse has no relevance to the issue of validity or invalidity at all, but instead aims to condemn some of the false views of the People of the Book.

Taking into account some other verses, Sobhani contends that the Qur'an states that the Jews and Christians described themselves as God's sons and favourites,<sup>1185</sup> claimed that the fire of hell would not touch them more than a few days,<sup>1186</sup> and thought that felicity and salvation were achievable only through Judaism or Christianity. As the Qur'an puts it, "and they say, 'Be either Jews or Christians, that you may be [rightly] guided'".<sup>1187</sup> They consequently considered for themselves an invincible immunity and exemption from the punishment of God in such a way that merely being Christian or Jewish was sufficient for salvation. In effect, it meant that they would be saved unconditionally and without performing any good deeds.

Responding to such egotistical and inconsiderate claims of the Christians and Jews, as Sobhani states, God reminds them first, that neither the Christians nor the Jews were the children of God and exceptionally "His beloved ones".<sup>1188</sup> Second, verse 2:62 asserts that salvation does not depend on merely being a Christian or a Jew but is contingent on believing in God and doing good deeds. This idea, namely, the insufficiency of a mere name to ensure salvation, can be supported by the verse "they say, 'No one shall enter paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their [false] hopes! Say, 'Produce your evidence, should you be truthful.' Certainly,

---

<sup>1183</sup> See in Ja'far Sobhani, *Mafahim al-Qur'an*, 14 vols., vol. 3 (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1993). 3.

<sup>1184</sup> See; *ibid.*, 2. 7. For more information of his biography see; Ja'far Sobhani, *Safahat min al-Hayat* (Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2009).

<sup>1185</sup> *The Qur'an*. 5:18.

<sup>1186</sup> *Ibid.* 2:80.

<sup>1187</sup> *Ibid.* 2:135.

<sup>1188</sup> *Ibid.* 5:18.

whoever submits his will to Allah and is virtuous, he shall have his reward near his Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve”.<sup>1189</sup>

Thus, it can be concluded that the aim of the verse in question is not to validate or invalidate Judaism and Christianity after the appearance of Islam, but to reveal the fact that felicity in any religion depends upon belief in God and doing good deeds not on just a formal confession to any faith including Judaism and Christianity. To put it another way, mere titles have no value unless they are associated with belief in God and good deeds. In summary, the verse is not aimed at addressing the issue of validity or invalidity of Judaism and Christianity at all, but rather, it underlines the unified and fundamental rule that entry into paradise depends on both belief in God and performing good deeds. The definitions of “true belief” and “good deeds” are beyond the scope of this verse and should be derived from somewhere else.<sup>1190</sup> Therefore, for Sobhani, verse 2:62 does not reveal an exclusivist reading, as Javadi holds, nor a pluralistic reading, as Ayoub claims.

In the light of what has been mentioned, it can be concluded that there are two significant differences between Javadi’s and Sobhani’s interpretations. Firstly, for Javadi the verse aims to make it clear for the People of the Book that the gate of paradise is not closed to them while for Sobhani, it is intended to show that salvation does not depend on titles, but rather on faith and good deeds. Secondly, For Javadi, the “good deeds” of the verse refers to the teachings of Islam while, for Sobhani, it is ambiguous (*mujmal*).

To conclude, Javadi tries to prove the invalidity of previous *shari’ahs* through verse 2:62 while Ayoub discovers the validity of previous *shari’ahs* through the same verse. Both thinkers focus on the phrase “good deeds” in their arguments. Moreover, Sobhani believes the verse is not in a position to illustrate the validity or invalidity of previous *shari’ahs*; rather, it aims to condemn the ambitious and arrogant claims of some of the People of the Book. The verse, therefore, is in fact not relevant to exclusivism or pluralism.

---

<sup>1189</sup> Ibid. 2:111-2.

<sup>1190</sup> Ja’far Sobhani, *Madkhal-i Masa’il-i Jadid dar ‘Ilm-i Kalam*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Qum: Mu’assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2000). 314-6. It should be noted that the roots of this interpretation can be found in Tabataba’i, *al-Mizan*, 1.193.

However, it seems that all the three views have neglected one very important point, that is, that validity and salvation, as Sadr al-Din points out, are two different matters and must be distinguished from each other.<sup>1191</sup> Verse 2:62, in the light of what Sadr al-Din states, may neither aim to refer to the issue of validity or invalidity of previous *shari'ahs* nor condemn the false views of the People of the Book; instead, it may refer to the matter of salvation. The act that we perform according to the will of God is valid. If He commands that the prayers should be recited towards the Sacred House in Mecca and we follow it, our prayer will be valid, and if someone performs his prayers in another direction, it will not be valid. The question of salvation, however, is different from the issue of validity. Salvation does not always depend on validity. Salvation is mainly based on two conditions, namely, faith in God and good deeds.

If one believes that, after the appearance of Islam, only one religion was ordained by God for all the people, namely, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, people who believe in God and try to find the only valid religion can be classified into two categories: those who find it and those who do not.

Regarding the first category, if they practice according to the *shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad, they will surely be saved; otherwise, they will not. The second category can be divided into two subgroups: the culpable (*muqassir*) and the unequipped (*qasir*). The culpable are those who have been able to find the true religion but have not made any efforts to realise it. This group will not be rewarded.<sup>1192</sup>

The unequipped are those who have not been able to find the true religion, either because they were not given enough information, or it never struck their minds that there is another path better than what they tread, or for any other reason. This group, if they perform good deeds according to their own religion or even according to their own *fitrah*, will be saved. Therefore, those who try to live based on ethical values, rooted in the *fitrah*, may be saved.

---

<sup>1191</sup> As it has been mentioned in the third chapter Sadr al-Din distinguished between the salvation and validity. See, Huseini and Ziynali, "Rastigari-yi Kithratgara." 114.

<sup>1192</sup> For more information about the incapable please see; Sobhani, *Madkhal-i Masa'il-i Jadid*, 2. 319-20; Muhammad Husein Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 20 vols., vol. 4 (Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996). 127; *ibid.*, 5. 51-2.

There are some verses in the Qur'an which can prove theologically the salvation of the unequipped group. For instance, there is a verse that states "We do not punish [any community] until We have sent [it] an apostle".<sup>1193</sup> According to this verse, the unequipped are amongst those groups which have not yet received any messages from His apostles. If He wants to chastise them on the Last Day, it is against His justice. "Justice is one of the divine attributes of His Beauty", and the Qur'an clearly rejects any possibility of His injustice.<sup>1194</sup> It states, "Indeed Allah does not wrong people in the least"<sup>1195</sup> and "Indeed Allah does not wrong [anyone] [even to the extent of] an atom's weight".<sup>1196</sup>

Having said that, one may reasonably suggest that verse 2:62 does not aim to prove the validity of previous *shari'ahs*, as Ayoub holds, or to invalidate them, as Javadi believes. It also does not intend to condemn the false thoughts of some Jews and Christians, as Sobhani believed. Rather it refers to the issue of salvation of unequipped people. The meaning of the verse, therefore, is that Jews, Christians and, in general, whoever has tried sincerely to achieve the true religion, even if what they have found was not the true religion, will be saved on condition that they believe in God and perform good deeds based on ethical values.

The salvation of such people does not imply the validity of their religions. In other words, salvation is not to be identified exclusively with validity; the question of salvation is much wider than the issue of validity. Therefore, a person may be saved despite not yet having found the true faith. It seems that this fact has been overlooked by Muslim pluralists. They regard salvation as equivalent to validity.<sup>1197</sup>

It should be noted that the salvation of the unequipped group is different from what the Christian inclusivists believe regarding the salvation of non-Christians. Karl Rahner held that there was only one true religion, but salvation was not confined to Christianity, and the followers of other religions would be also saved as "anonymous

<sup>1193</sup> *The Qur'an*. 10:44. See also; the verse "Allah does not task any soul except [according to] what He has given it. Ibid. 65:7.

<sup>1194</sup> Sobhani, *Doctrine of Shi'i*. 48.

<sup>1195</sup> *The Qur'an*. 17:15.

<sup>1196</sup> Ibid.4:40.

<sup>1197</sup> Aydin, "Religious Pluralism."2-3; Aydin, "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths." 48; Khurramshahi, "Qur'an va Ilahiyyat-i Jahani." 175' Ayoub, "The Islamic Context." 21; Ayoub, "The Need for Harmony." 14.

Christians”.<sup>1198</sup> It is clear that, according to what was said, unequipped Christians, for instance, will not be saved as anonymous Muslims. God’s justice provides the rationale for their salvation and not being regarded as anonymous Muslims. There is, therefore, no equivalence to inclusivism in this perspective.

Thus, based on this latest view, verse 2:62 refers generally to the question of salvation not to the validity or invalidity of the faith of the People of the Book.

## 7.7 Conclusion

The Qur’an is the most important source of Islamic theology, and, as such, Muslim exclusivists and pluralists have referred to different verses of the Qur’an to support their views. The verse “Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve” is one of the most cited verses on this theme. Ayoub and Javadi present two different interpretations for the verse. Javadi presents an exclusivist reading of the verse, leading to the invalidity of the previous *shari’ahs*. Based on the preceding verses, Javadi holds that some Jews, after the appearance of Prophet Muhammad, believed that salvation was impossible for them due to the disobedience of their ancestors. God, in order to correct such thoughts, revealed the verse stating that the humiliation that was ordained for them could be removed by embracing Islam. He adds that performing good deeds, from the Qur’anic perspective is a practice that should be fulfilled according to the present *shari’ah*. He concludes that the gate of salvation is open to Jews and Christians on condition that they practice based on the *shari’ah* of Prophet Muhammad. The verse, for Javadi, commands the followers of other *shari’ahs* to embrace Islam.

Ayoub, on the contrary, presents a pluralistic reading of the verse. He holds that, according to the verse, there are two conditions for salvation: possession of faith in God and performing any good deeds. These two elements are so important for salvation that the verse containing them was revealed twice, once at the beginning

---

<sup>1198</sup> Rahner, "Religious Inclusivism." 503. See also Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 32-3; Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*. 228.



and again at the end of Muhammad's mission. He adds that the word *iman* (faith) in the verse is not simply a label for a particular group, and "good deeds" are not confined to the teachings of Islam. Therefore, if the followers of the revealed religions believe in Allah and perform good deeds they will be rewarded. There is no need, hence, to abandon their own *shari'ahs* and embrace Islam.

While Javadi maintains that the verse in question aims to invalidate the previous *shari'ahs* and Ayoub holds that it intends to prove their validity, Sobhani suggests a different view and believes that the verse has no relevance to the issue of invalidity or validity of previous *shari'ahs*. Rather, he holds that it aims to condemn some wrong views of the people of the Book. They, as the Qur'an expresses, considered themselves as the beloved people of God and maintained that salvation was achievable only through carrying the title of Judaism or Christianity. In other words, being Christian or Jewish was sufficient for salvation without performing any good deeds. To respond to such irresponsible claims, Allah revealed the verse under discussion to condemn their false thought. The goal of the verse was to prove that salvation is not achieved solely based on religious titles but that it depends on belief in God and performing good deeds. However, the definitions of true belief and good deeds are beyond the scope of the verse and they should be deduced from other verses. For Sobhani, the verse does not refer to exclusivism or pluralism.

All the three views, however, neglect the crucial fact that salvation and validity can be distinguished from each other. The verse neither intends to refer to the validity or invalidity of previous *shari'ahs* nor to criticize the false thoughts of the People of the Book. It rather aims to refer to the salvation of the unequipped people who do not follow a valid religion. These people will be saved on condition that they believe in God and attempt to live righteously and perform good deeds based on ethical values and *fitrah*.

## **8 Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

The attack on the twin towers in September 2001 created a dramatically negative effect in the relationship between Islam and the West by producing a distorted and unpleasant image of Islam. Even many ordinary Westerners started to view Muslim with increasing suspicion. In such an atmosphere, it was perhaps not so surprising to see the public opinion make an indiscriminate judgment about all Muslims, regardless of their religious denominations and political affiliations. Islam was started to be presented by media and some politicians as a monolithic faith encouraging its members to get involved in acts of terror.

Correcting such an outlook requires effective social and academic efforts. This research, in its own way, attempted to illustrate that Islam is not a monolithic system, but rather, it is composed of varied denominations, thoughts, views and ideologies. There are Shi'ahs and Sunnis, Salafis and Sufis, moderates and extremists, and pluralists and exclusivists. It further tried to demonstrate that although the scholars of a single denomination may cling to the same sources and believe in the same theological concepts, their interpretations of a single text may differ, partly due to the difference in their social and educational backgrounds. To demonstrate this fact practically, the thesis chose the concept of religious diversity and compared the views of two prominent Shi'ah thinkers, Ayatollah Javadi and Professor Ayoub, who come from two distinctly different social and educational backgrounds and live and work in two different social settings. The thesis attempted to show how they drew different understandings from the same sources and how their backgrounds were instrumental for arriving at those conclusions.

The question of diversity of religions and the truth and salvation that each can offer was chosen because it has a great practical impact in our modern closely-knit global society. It can determine how different faiths should view each other in the modern multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. There is no wonder why this question emerged as one of the major topics of the philosophy of religion in the past and present centuries. This question has divided the students of religion into three groups: exclusivists, inclusivists and pluralists. Although the concept of exclusivism,

inclusivism and pluralism were born in the West, they were not contained there, and soon the theologians of other faiths found themselves addressing the same issues. However, despite the remarkable research in this field and great attention to Islamic Studies in Western universities, little has been done on the comparative study of the views of Muslim thinkers in this area, and still far less on the views of Shi'ah scholars who have written on the diversity of religions and have discussed exclusivism and pluralism.

Since it was impossible to address the views of all Muslim thinkers, this inquiry confine itself to the views of two Shi'ah theologians. However, the aim was not to compare just any two thinkers amongst the Shi'ah scholars. The thesis has selected two very prominent and widely read scholars with two completely different backgrounds. To that end, this research aimed to address and compare the views of Ayoub and Javadi on the question of religious diversity, exclusivism and pluralism. The significance of these two thinkers is that they are from different backgrounds, education and contexts. While Ayoub is from a multi-cultural, multi-religious Arab background, has been educated in the West, and has lived in a Muslim-minority society writing mainly in English, Javadi was born in Iran, was trained in the traditional seminary of Qum, lives in an Islamic country and writes in Persian. These thinkers, due to their different backgrounds, try to look at the diversity of religions from two different perspectives, that is, rational-analytical and Qur'anic viewpoints.

It can be understood from the findings of the thesis that the two thinkers have two different audiences. Javadi, due to the above-mentioned background, speaks to an audience with mainly Shi'ah tendencies. Although he sometimes tries to tackle the arguments of non-Shi'i and non-Muslim scholars, his main aim is to convince his ideologically monolithic audience. Ayoub, on the other hand, speaks for a mixed audience of Muslims and non-Muslims living in the West with different views and tendencies.

Such situation leads Javadi to have a participant approach. However, with the emergence of new thoughts and trends in human studies, such as, humanism, secularism, spiritualism and pluralism etc., Javadi felt the need to discuss them as a Muslim theologian, mainly for his committed Shi'i audience. Nevertheless, his

position is always consistent with his rational understanding of the verses of the Qur'an and the contents of hadith. Although Ayoub's view is also faith-based, but due to his Western experience and audience, he tries to incorporate views of other faiths in his argument and assumes an interfaith approach. He does not limit himself to traditional understanding of the Qur'an and hadith, rather tries to interpret them in a way to take more west-oriented observant approach, compared to Javadi, and to include people of other faiths in his address.

Having said that, this thesis tried to explain why the directions of Ayoub's and Javadi's works on the issue of diversity of religions are different. It was shown that while Ayoub mostly focuses on the comparative study of Islam with other religions, Javadi is not interested in comparative approaches, but rather focuses on analysing other faiths by drawing on Islamic teachings only. It was demonstrated that although both scholars are in favour of dialogue and understanding other faith, each approach it in their own distinct way. Ayoub has more empathy with other faiths and tries to understand them as their followers do, while Javadi looks at them only from the vantage point of Islamic sources. The thesis tried to show how these different approaches influenced their direction toward pluralism or exclusivism. It should be, however, noted that the reference to Ayoub and Javadi, who come from different backgrounds, can be taken as a case study of the large question of religious diversity and complexity of views on the matter even within just one segment of the faith.

Since the concern for understanding and analysing the diversity of religions was mostly shown by Christian scholars, this research took a general overview of their responses, ideas and theories about the plurality of religions over the past decades. This was necessary since both Ayoub and Javadi were, explicitly or implicitly, referring to many of these studies in their discussions about different topics connected to the diversity of religions. Ayoub was a student of Smith and was influenced by his thoughts, while Javadi is given an indirect response to Hick's views on religious pluralism. In effect, most of the concepts, discussions and arguments provided by the two thinkers address what the Christian theologians have discussed in this field.

In the first chapter, therefore, I attempted to outline the theological arguments regarding the plurality of religions, that is, the exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist approaches. Exclusivists hold that only one particular religion possesses the truth and can lead its adherents to salvation and that the followers of other religions cannot attain salvation. Inclusivists, who emerged in reaction to such extreme positions, hold that although there is only one true religion, the sincere followers of other religions may also attain salvation. They endeavour to give some room in paradise to the adherents of other faiths. This slight openness of the gate of paradise, however, did not convince some other theologians who hold that such exclusivist and inclusivist approaches implicitly deny God's absolute mercy. These theologians emphasize that God is the Lord of the whole universe and desires the salvation of all His creatures. These pluralists, therefore, believe that all the major religions of the world are true and can lead their followers toward salvation.

As it has been argued, the triple classification is not a solely Christian thought; rather, it can be found in the works of the theologians of other religions. What has emerged from this thesis is that the question of religious diversity, as addressed by Western theologians nowadays, has not been subjected to rigorous discussion by Muslim scholars in the past although it has been considered in certain forms in the realm of theology, jurisprudence and law. In this context, Chapter two looks at a brief history of classical Shi'ah attitudes to religious diversity. Muslim theologians have addressed this question in the past under the headings of "the unity of God", "the necessity of prophethood" and "*naskh*" (abrogation). The question of plurality of faiths also has been subjected to discussion by Muslim jurists under the title of "*ahkam al-kufr*", (the rulings of disbeliefs) "*kitab al-Taharah*", (ritual purity) "*kitab al-diyah*" (blood money), and the marriage of Muslims with non-Muslims. The Muslim jurisprudents have discussed the question where they argued for or against the validity of previous *shari'ahs* under the title of "*istishab*" (presumption of continuity). This thesis, in order to look at the perspectives of classical Shi'ah scholars on the issue of the diversity of religions, addressed the views of three influential scholars, namely, al-Shaykh al-Tusi, Sadr al-Din Shirazi and al-Shaykh al-Ansari on the question of religions. Based on their expertise, it described their views from different angles, that is, theological, exegetical and jurisprudential perspectives.

The thesis addressed the views of these prominent Shi'ah scholars because, in the author's view, both Javadi and Ayoub were aware of and influenced by them. As a philosopher, Javadi is especially under the influence of Sad al-Din and as a *mujtahid* he uses al-Shaykh al-Ansari's arguments which underpin many of his jurist deductions. Al-Tusi is arguably one of the most important architects of the rational Shi'ah trend of thinking to which both Javadi and Ayoub subscribe.

Chapter three provided a brief biography of Javadi and Ayoub and a detailed account of their works. It demonstrated their interest in the interfaith dialogue and their different and distinct contributions to this field.

One of the main problems in religious studies is the dichotomy of insider/outsider view. Much has been discussed in this regard and so many questions have been raised, among which the following two questions seem to be of high significance to our study. Can we comprehend a faith in its totality as an outsider observer? On the other hand can we judge our own faith while we persist on our insider understandings and feelings? To answer these questions is beyond the scope of this thesis. My approach here has been to understand the views of Ayoub and Javadi as an insider, but to evaluate their respective positions as an impartial observer. I believe that the main objective of this thesis could not have been achieved except through such an approach. The insider opportunity enabled me to closely understand what they say and why and how they say it. On the other hand, after understanding and explaining the intricacies of their respective religious views, I could place myself in the position of an impartial observer to compare and evaluate their opinions. In the course of the thesis I have tried to be a fair observer to see the strengths or the inconsistencies in the views of the two thinkers.

The thesis proceeded in Chapter four and five to outline the views of Javadi and Ayoub on the diversity of religions. It was established that although Western theologians have proposed many classifications for religions, in the eyes of both Ayoub and Javadi, they can be classified according to their founders into revealed and non-revealed religions. The revealed religions are those which are rooted in divine revelation and are not the production of their founders' thoughts, reflections and contemplations. The non-revealed, on the contrary, are not rooted in revelation

and their founders do not have any claim to receiving these teachings from God. This research concluded that this classification, according to Javadi and Ayoub's perspectives, was more accurate and comprehensive than other classifications presented mainly by Western scholars.

The invalidity of non-revealed religions is agreed upon by both thinkers. They, however, try to address it from different angles. Ayoub attempts to argue from a Qur'anic perspective. According to the Qur'an, the authenticity of every religion is contingent upon the reception of revelation. The non-revealed religions, therefore, cannot be considered as valid. Javadi, on the contrary, assumes an analytical-rational approach. He resorts to Avicenna's philosophical arguments and states that human laws are not rendered immune from errors and faults and cannot reveal God's commands. As we see, both thinkers prove the invalidity of non-revealed religions, even though with different methods. Javadi is more influenced by the philosophical views of Sadr al-Din and Ayoub is driven by historical and exegetical texts and his theological reflections on the verses of the Qur'an.

This research made it clear that the teachings of revealed religions can be divided into two categories: tenets and precepts, or religious beliefs and religious rulings. In terms of religious beliefs, both thinkers attempt to highlight the similarities. However, Ayoub, due to his past experience of conversion to Christianity and reverting back to Islam has much more to say here. Both thinkers lay much stress upon man's primordial nature (*fitrah*) and hold that the reason for the similarities stems from man's unchangeable *fitrah*.

This thesis argued that *fitrah* is not able to establish anything more than an intrinsic awareness of God in human being. Thus, the argument from *fitrah* cannot prove the immutability of all religious beliefs in detail. Muslim theologians, in order to establish religious beliefs beyond the existence of God, have not referred to the argument of *fitrah*. If all or at least the majority of religious beliefs were rooted in *fitrah*, as Ayoub and Javadi hold, Muslim theologians, in order to prove them, would have referred to *fitrah*. Therefore, the immutability of the tenets of revealed religions cannot be proven by drawing on the immutability of the *fitrah* of people.

This thesis demonstrated that the Qur'anic perspective regarding religious beliefs is based on intellectual analysis. Therefore, Chapter six provided a comparative account of the views of the two thinkers based on their rational arguments. Shi'ah theologians, including Javadi, state that the main articles of faith should be provable via decisive rational judgment. Based on this, they have argued for the uniformity of the religious beliefs of all Prophets. This argument consists of two premises. First, the religious beliefs are based on intellectual reasoning, and second, the conclusions of intellectual reasoning are definitive. Hence, it can be concluded that the religious beliefs of the revealed religions which are based on intellectual reasoning are definitive and should be the same. In other words, if the unity of God, for instance, is proven decisively by intellectual arguments, this belief should be universal, permanent and unabrogated in all times and places.

Both thinkers accept the naturalness of dissimilarities in the realm of religious practices but provide different and conflicting rationale for it. Ayoub holds that human beings are different in terms of race, language and culture and that it is God's will that they should be different. For Ayoub, the variety of races, cultures and languages, necessitates the variety of religious practices. He argues that Prophet Muhammad did not abrogate the precepts of previous religions. However, he does not present any historical or intellectual reasoning for his claim and does not make it clear how the diversity of races makes for the diversity of laws. On the contrary, Javadi maintains that whatever is based on the immutable *fitrah*, such as prayer and charity, cannot be abrogated by the following Prophet. However, the form and conditions of prayer and charity, which are not rooted in the *fitrah*, can be subject to abrogation. Javadi, referring to some Qur'anic verses holds that Prophet Muhammad, due to the conditions of time and place, abrogated some of these minor rules that were not rooted in the *fitrah*.

In the arguments regarding exclusivism and pluralism, the Qur'an and hadiths have been among the most important sources for both Muslim exclusivists and pluralists, as they have been for Javadi and Ayoub. The verse "Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans, those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have



no fear, nor will they grieve”<sup>1199</sup> is one of the most cited verses on the question of the validity of religions.

Thus, Chapter seven compared the interpretations of the verse provided by Javadi and Ayoub and the conclusions that they draw from the verse. Ayoub presents a pluralist reading of the verse. For him, possession of divine scripture and performing any good deed, as the verse shows, are the only criteria for salvation. In other words, since God does not restrict good deeds, in the verse, to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, it entails that any good deed recommended by every Books is acceptable. Ayoub, therefore, resorts to the general purport (*itlaq*) of the verse to prove the validity of any faith and any good deed. Javadi, on the contrary, favours an exclusivist reading of the verse. He holds that, in the Qur’anic perspective, a good deed should be performed according to the present *shari’ah*, otherwise it would not be considered as a good deed. The Christians and Jews, therefore, should accept Islam if they want their moral acts to be regarded as good deed. For Javadi, good deeds are conditioned (*mugayyad*) and, for Ayoub, they are unconditioned (*mutlaq*).

At the end of this chapter, the views of Ayatollah Ja’far Sobhani regarding the verse under discussion were presented as well. It is important to show that there are differences of opinion regarding this verse even among the scholars in the seminary of Qum. Sobhani was chosen because he is similar to Javadi in terms of milieu, education and achievements. While Ayoub presents a pluralistic view by reasoning in favour of the validity of previous religions, and Javadi gives an exclusivist reading rejecting the validity of the previous religions, Sobhani maintains that the verse has no relevance to the question of validity or invalidity of previous religions. Rather the verse aims to condemn some of the false thoughts of the People of the Book. In other words, the verse aims to reveal the fact that salvation in all faiths is based on belief in God and good deeds. In other words, a mere title has no value in and of itself. Sobhani adds that the definitions of true belief and good deeds are beyond the scope of this verse and should be derived from other verses. For Sobhani the verse does not aim to prove religious pluralism or exclusivism.

---

<sup>1199</sup> *The Qur’an*. 2:62.

This thesis argued that this verse aims neither to refer to the question of validity or invalidity of previous religions nor to condemn some wrong views of the People of the Book; rather, it aims to discuss the question of salvation of those people who, despite their good will, have not been able to find the true religion. In other words, the verse refers to the salvation of those who have attempted sincerely to obtain the true religion, even if what they have followed is not the true religion before God.

## 8.1 Further Research

Having compared the views of two prominent Shi'ah Muslim thinkers, Ayoub and Javadi, the writer of this research thinks that there are certain related areas that are in need of more research.

1- A comparative study of Islam and non-revealed religions. The language barrier and lack of communication were great obstacles that prevented the theologians of religions to be aware of the thoughts of others in the past. In recent decades, however, we are witnessing a growing interest in inter-faith knowledge. Paul Tillich<sup>1200</sup>, Paul F. Knitter<sup>1201</sup> and John Hick have made worthy and profound contributions in this field. In the realm of Abrahamic religions, the Shi'ah community has played an effective part, and in recent years, Ayoub has excelled over other Muslims in this field and his works have been admired by Muslim and non-Muslim scholars, including William Montgomery Watt.<sup>1202</sup> Nonetheless, Islamic research suffers from lack of understanding of the so called wisdom-centred religions in China and India and the native religions of the Americas and Africa. There is a need for comparative study of Islam and these non-revealed religions. Two reasons can emphasize the significance of such an inquiry. First, as Muslim theologians believe, God has sent His messengers to all places and all people. It means that God did not deprive anybody from prophetic guidance. The Qur'an says, "there is not a nation but a warner has passed in it"<sup>1203</sup> and "faithless from among the People of the

---

<sup>1200</sup> Mircea Eliade, "Paul Tillich and the History of Religions," in *The Future of Religions*, ed. Jerald C. Brauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).31-6; Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 12.

<sup>1201</sup> For his dialectical odyssey see, Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility* (New York: Orbis Books, 1995). 1-20.

<sup>1202</sup> Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. 127.

<sup>1203</sup> *The Qur'an*.35:24.

Book and the polytheists were not set apart until the proof had come to them”.<sup>1204</sup> As such, the wisdom contained in these non-revealed religions must be rooted in some revelation as the above indicate. Second, the stance of Muslim theologians has not been well defined regarding these religions.

Certain questions should be answered in such a research. Why was the Middle East, according to Islamic literature, the cradle of divine Prophets? Is there any historical evidence or Islamic narration which may denote that God has sent His apostles to the West? If not, can the absence of information denote that they were deprived of prophetic guidance? What theological problems would this pose for Muslim theologians? Is it true that some of the wisdom-centred religions contain some prophetic truths, and if so, how did they achieve these truths without prophetic guidance? Are these religions dramatically different from Islam in form or in kind? Can a Muslim theologian maintain that these religions lead their followers toward ultimate reality? What is the common ground between their teachings with Islam in the realm of religious beliefs, religious practice and religious ethical values?

2- Islam and the truths of other religions. Islam sees itself as the perfect and final revealed religion. However, there are other faiths that have a claim to absolute truth, too. A realistic Muslim theologian cannot ignore other faiths and has to assess the various claims to truth. So, the question is how can they be judged and evaluated? Is there an independent criterion for such evaluation? Christian scholars have introduced various criteria for the evaluation of other faiths. “God’s self-revelation in his word”<sup>1205</sup>, “uniqueness, superiority, normativeness, finality”, morality and eschatology are amongst those criteria, which may enable the theologians to adjudicate the conflicting truth claims of other religions.<sup>1206</sup> Hick also refers to another independent criterion and suggests that all religions including Christianity should place God “at the centre” and all traditions should “serve and revolve around him”.<sup>1207</sup>

---

<sup>1204</sup> Ibid. 98:1.

<sup>1205</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 14-24.

<sup>1206</sup> Ibid.103-118. See also; Wainwright, *Philosophy of Religion*. 182-97; Ninian Smart, "Truth and Religions," in *Truth and Dialogue: The Relation Between World Religions*, ed. John Hick (London: Sheldon Press, 1974). 45-58.

<sup>1207</sup> Hick, *God and the Universe*.131. See also; Hick, *Problems of Religious*. 30.

Richards disappointedly reports that he could not find an independent criterion for the truth claims of different religions.<sup>1208</sup> Can Muslim theologians find an external criterion and independent from the Islamic perspective to adjudicate the validity and truth claims of other religious teachings in terms of both religious beliefs and religious practices? Although the writer of this thesis suggests that reason is a common language that can enable us to assess and adjudicate the truth claims of other traditions, this criterion and other possible criteria deserve to be researched comprehensively in future.

---

<sup>1208</sup> Richards, *Towards a Theology*. 118.

## 9 Bibliography

### Primary Sources

- Ayoub, Mahmoud Mustafa. "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Goals and Obstacles." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 64-9. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . *The Crisis of Muslim History: Religion and Politics in Early Islam*. Oneworld: Oxford, 2005.
- . "Dhimmah in the Qur'an and Hadith." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 98-107. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Introduction." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 1-6. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Islam and Christianity: Between Tolerance and Acceptance." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 32-41. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Islam and Pluralism." *Encounters: Journal of Intercultural Perspectives* 3 Part 2 (1997): 103-18.
- . "Islam between Ideals and Idologies: Toward a Theology of Islamic History." In *The Islamic Impulse*, edited by Barbara Freyer Stowasser, 297-319. London: Croom Helm, 1987.
- . *Islam Faith and History*. Oxford: Onworld, 2004.
- . *Islam Faith and Practice*. London: The Open Press Limited, 1989.
- . "The Islamic Context of Muslim-Christian Relations." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 17-31. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "The Islamic Tradition." Chap. 5 In *World Religions: Western Traditions*, edited by Willard G. Oxtoby, 341-461. Canada: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . "Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms Ibn and Walad in the Qur'an and Tafsir Tradition." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 117-33. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Law and Grace in Islam: Sufi Attitudes Towards the Shari'ah." In *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, edited by Edwin B. Firmage, Bernard G. Weiss and John W. Welch, 221-29. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990.
- . "A Muslim Appreciation of Christian Holiness." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 73-9. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Muslim Views of Christianity: Some Modern Examples." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 212-31. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "Nearest in Amity: Christians in the Qur'an and Contemporary Exegetical Tradition." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 187-211. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "The Need for Harmony and Collaboration between Muslims and Christians." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 9-16. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "One God and Many Faiths: Islam and the Challenge of Interreligious Dialogue." *The Drew Gateway* 58, no. 3 (1989): 52-7.
- . "Pope John Paul II on Islam." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 232-45. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "The Qur'an in Muslim Life and Practice." In *The Muslim Almanac*, edited by Azim A. Nanji, 19-24. London/New York: Gale Research Inc, 1995.
- . *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.
- . *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.
- . "Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an." Chap. 1 In *Contemporary Approaches to the Qur'an and Sunnah*, edited by Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub, 39-56. London/Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012.
- . "Revelation and Salvation: Towards an Islamic View of History." *International Journal of Shi'i Studies* 1 (Fall 2013): 47-66.

- . "Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, 42-63. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- . "The Speaking Qur'an and the Silent Qur'an." In *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an*, 177-98. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- . "The Ways of the Introduction of Shi'ah." *Ma'rifat* 14 (1995): 85-7.
- . "The Word of God and the Voices of Humanity." In *The Experience of Religious Diversity*, edited by John Hick and Hassan Askari, 53-65. Aldershot: Gower Publishing Co, 1985.
- . "The Word of God in Islam." *Muslim-Greek Orthodox Relation* 31, no. 1-2 (1986): 69-78.
- Javadi, 'Abdullah. *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*. 7 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*. 7 vols. Vol. 7, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Adab-i Fanay-i Muqarraban*. 7 vols. Vol. 6, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Afaq-i Andishih*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Bunyan-i Marsus*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005.
- . *A Commentary of Theistic Arguments*. Translated by Hasan Allahyari. Qum: Ansariyan Publication, 2002.
- . *Din Shinasi*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2004.
- . *Intizar-i Bashar az Din*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2001.
- . *Islam va Muhit-i Zist*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Manzil-i 'Aql dar Hindisi-yi Ma'rifat-i Dini*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Mir-i Ustad*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 1012.
- . *Nisbat-i Din va Dunya*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2002.
- . *Qur'an-i Karim az Manzar-i Imam Rida*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007.
- . *Ravabit-i Bayn al-Milal*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishih*. 6 vols. Vol. 4, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007.
- . *Sar-chishmi-yi Andishih*. 6 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2006.
- . *Shams al-Wahy-i Tabrizi: Siri-yi 'Amali-yi 'Allami-yi Tabataba'i*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007.
- . *Shari'at dar Ayini-yi Ma'rifat*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005.
- . *Tabyin-i Barahin-i Ithbat-i Khuda*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 1999.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Fitrat dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 12, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Jami'ih dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 17, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Ma'rifat-shinasi dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 13, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2000.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Qur'an dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Sirat va Surat-i Insan dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 14, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2002.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Siri-yi Hadrat-i Muhammad dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 8, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2002.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Siri-yi Piyambaran dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 6, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Vahy va Nubuvvat dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2005.
- . *Tafsir-i Mawdu'i-yi Qur'an-i Karim: Hidayat dar Qur'an*. 19 vols. Vol. 16, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2007.
- . *Tahrir Tamhid al-Qawa'id*. 3 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2008.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 22, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 2, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 21, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 17, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 14, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 1, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 4, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 11, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2008.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 10, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnim: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karim*. Vol. 12, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.

- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 20, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 9, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 15, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 5, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 6, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 23, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2011.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 7, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 13, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Tasnīm: Tafsir-i Qur'an-i Karīm*. Vol. 8, Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2009.
- . *Vahdat Javami' dar Nahj al-Balaghah*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Vahy va Nubuvvat*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.
- . *Vilayat-i Faqih*. Qum: Markaz-i Nashr-i Isra', 2010.

## Secondary Sources

- 'Abd al-Jabbar, Qadi. *Sharh al-Usul al-Khamsah*. Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, n.d.
- Abu Rayhan, Al-Biruni. *Tahqiq ma li al-Hind*. Translated by Manuchihr Saduqi. Tehran: Suha, 1983.
- Ahmadi, Ahmad. *Makatab al-Rasul*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Sab, n.d.
- Al-Alusi, Mahmud. *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. 16 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994.
- Al-Amidi, Sayf al-Din. *Ghayah al-Maram fi 'Ilm al-Kalam*. Qum: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.
- Al-'Amili, Muhammad Jawad. *Miftah al-Kiramah*. 21 vols. Vol. 12, Qum: Nashr-i Islami, 1998.
- Al-'Amili, Wafiq Sa'd. *'Ayn al-Insaf*. Beirut: Dar al-Sirah, 2001.
- Al-Amin, Muhsin. *A 'yan al-Shi'ah*. 10 vols. Vol. 10, Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1983.
- . *A 'yan al-Shi'ah*. 10 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1983.
- . *A 'yan al-Shi'ah*. 10 vols. Vol. 5, Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1983.
- Al-Ansari, Murtada. *Fara'id al-Usul*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Jami'i-yi Mudarrisin, n.d.
- . *Kitab al-Taharah*. 5 vols. Vol. 5, Qum: Majma' al-Fikr al-Islami, 2006.
- Al-Ardabili, Ahmad. *Zubdah al-Bayan fi Ahkam al-Qur'an*. Tehran: al-Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, n.d.
- Al-'Arusi, 'Abd al-Ali. *Tafsir al-Nur al-Thaqalayn*. 5 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Isma'iliyyah, 1994.
- Al-Ash'ari, Abu al-Hasan. *al-Ibanah 'an Usul al-Diyanah*. Hiydar Abad: al-Nizami, n.d.
- Al-'Asqalani, Ibn Hajar. *al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*. 8 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1994.
- Al-Bahrani, Hashim. *al-Burhan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 5 vols. Vol. 4, Tehran: Bunyad-i Bi'that, 1995.
- Al-Bahrani, Ibn Maytham. *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah*. 4 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Maktab al-'Alam al-Islami, 1983.
- Al-Baladhuri, Ahmad. *Ansab al-Ashraf*. 13 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Jam'iyyah al-Mustashriqin al-Almaniyyah, 1978.
- Al-Balaghi, Muhammad Jawad. *Ala' al-Rahman fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Bunyad-i Bi'that, 1999.
- Al-Baydawi, 'Abdullah. *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil*. 5 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1997.
- Al-Bayhaqi, Ahmad. *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah wa Ma'rifah Ahwal Sahib al-Shari'ah*. 7 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1984.
- Al-Bukhari, Muhammad. *Sahih al-Bukhari*. 8 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr 1981.
- Al-Darimi, 'Abdullah. *Sunan al-Darimi*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Damascus: Maktab al-Hadithah, 1930.
- Al-Dhahabi, Muhammad. *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*. 23 vols. Vol. 3, Beirut: al-Risalah, 1992.
- . *Tarikh al-Islami*. 57 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1987.
- . *Tarikh al-Islami*. 57 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1987.
- Al-Diyarbakri, Husein. *Tarikh al-Khamis fi Ahwal Anfus al-Nafis*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Mu'assasah Sha'ban, n.d.
- Al-Fiyumi, Ahmad. *al-Misbah al-Munir*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Dar al-Hijrah, 1993.
- Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid. *al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*. Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.

- Al-Hamd, 'Abd al-Qadir. *Tahdhib al-Tafsir wa Tajrid al-Ta'wil mimma Ulhiq bihi min al-Abatil wa Rad' al-Aqawil*. 5 vols. Vol. 4, Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1993.
- . *Tahdhib al-Tafsir wa Tajrid al-Ta'wil mimma Ulhiq bihi min al-Abatil wa Rad' al-Aqawil*. 5 vols. Vol. 1, Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', 1993.
- Al-Hilli, Hasan. *al-Bab al-Hadi 'Ashar*. Mashhad: Astan-i Quds-i Razavi, 1991.
- . *Kashf al-Murad fi Sharh al-Tajrid al-I'tiqad*. Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1996.
- . *Wajib al-I'tiqad 'ala Jami' al-'Ibad*. Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1995.
- Al-Hilli, Ja'far. *al-Masalik fi Usul al-Din*. Mashhad: Markaz al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah, 1993.
- Al-Hulw, Muhammad Ali. *Mawsu'ah al-Adab al-Shi'r al-Muhsin Ibn 'Ali*. Qum: Dar al-Kitab, 1998.
- Al-Iji, Mir sayyid Sharif. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*. 8 vols. Vol. 8, Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, n.d.
- Al-Isfara'ini, Tahir. *al-Tabsir fi al-Din*. Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azhariyyah, n.d.
- Al-Kulayni, Muhammad. *al-Kafi*. 8 vols. Vol. 8, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986.
- . *al-Kafi*. 8 vols. Vol. 1, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986.
- . *al-Kafi*. 8 vols. Vol. 2, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1986.
- Al-Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir. *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 20, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 50, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 11, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 15, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 89, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Bihar al-Anwar*. 111 vols. Vol. 16, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1982.
- . *Mir'at al-'Uqul fi Akhbar al-Rasul*. 26 vols. Vol. 3, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1983.
- Al-Miqdad, al-Fadil. *al-I'timad fi Sharh Wajib al-I'tiqad*. Mashhad: Majma' al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah, 1991.
- . *al-Lawami' al-Ilahiyyah fi al-Mabahith al-Kalamiyyah*. Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 2007.
- Al-Miqrizi, Ahmad. *Amta' al-Asma' bima li al-Nabiyy min al-Ahwal wa al-Amwal wa al-Hafadah wa al-Mata'*. 15 vols. Vol. 12, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999.
- Al-Mufid, Muhammad. *al-Mughni'ah*. Qum: Daftar-i Tablighat-i Islami, 1989.
- Al-Murtada, al-Sayyid. *al-Dhakhirah fi 'Ilm al-Kalam*. Qum: Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1990.
- . *Rasa'il al-Sharif al-Murtada*. 4 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Dar al-Qur'an al-Karim, 1984.
- Al-Muttaqi, Ali. *Kanz al-'Ummal*. 16 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Risalat, 1985.
- Al-Radi, Muhammad. *Nahj al-Balaghah*. Tehran: Uswah li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 1994.
- Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, Husein. *al-Mufradat fi Ghara'ib al-Qur'an*. Beirut/Damascus: Dar al-'Ilm al-Shamitiyyah, 1991.
- Al-Razi, Fakhr al-Din. *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. 32 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999.
- . *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. 32 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999.
- . *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. 32 vols. Vol. 19, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999.
- . *Mafatih al-Ghayb*. 32 vols. Vol. 7, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999.
- Al-Saduq, Muhammad. *al-I'tiqadat*. Qum: al-Mu'tamar al-'Alami li al-Shaykh al-Mufid, n.d.
- . *al-Tawhid*. Qum: Jami'i-yi Mudarrisin, 1977.
- . *'Ilal al-Sharayi'*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Davari, 1996.
- . *Kamal al-Din wa Tamam al-Ni'mah*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Nashr al-Islami, 1984.
- Al-Salihi, Muhammad. *Subul al-Huda wa al-Rashad fi Sirah Khayr al-'Ibad*. 12 vols. Vol. 11, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993.
- Al-Shahid al-Thani, Zayn al-Din. *al-Ri'ayah fi 'Ilm al-Dirayah*. Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1987.
- Al-Shahristani, Muhammad. *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: al-Sharif al-Radi, 1991.
- Al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din. *al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur*. 6 vols. Vol. 6, Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1983.
- . *al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma'thur*. 6 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1983.
- . *al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996.
- Al-Tabari, Muhammad. *Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 30 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1991.



- . *Tarikh al-Tabari*. 11 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Turath, 1967.
- Al-Tabarsi, Amin al-Islam. *Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 4, Tehran: Intisharat-i Nasir Khusru, 1993.
- . *Majma' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 1, Tehran: Intisharat-i Nasir Khusru, 1993.
- Al-Taftazani, Sa'd al-Din. *Sharh al-Maqasid*. 5 vols. Vol. 5, Beirut: Sharif al-Radi, n.d.
- Al-Tusi, Muhammad. *al-Amali*. Qum: Dar al-Thaqafah, 1993.
- . *al-Iqtisad fima Yata'allq bi al-I'tiqad*. Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, n.d.
- . *al-Mabsut fi al-Fiqh al-Imamiyyah*. 8 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, 1067.
- . *al-Mabsut fi al-Fiqh al-Imamiyyah*. 8 vols. Vol. 7, Qum: Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, 1967.
- . *al-Mabsut fi al-Fiqh al-Imamiyyah*. 8 vols. Vol. 4, Qum: Maktabah al-Murtadawiyyah, 1967.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 8, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 3, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 5, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 7, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 10 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- . *'Uddah al-Usul*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Sitarih, 1997.
- Al-Tusi, Nasir al-Din. *Asas al-Iqtibas*. Tehran: Danishgah-i Tehran, 1981.
- . *Majmu'iy-i Rasa'il-i Khajah Nasir-i Tusi*. Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1984.
- . *Risalah al-Qawa'id al-'Aqa'id*. Beirut: Dar al-Ghurbah, 1992.
- . *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. 3 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996.
- . *Sharh al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*. 3 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Nashr al-Balaghah, 1996.
- . *Tajrid al-I'tiqad*. Qum: Daftar-i Tablighat-i Islami, 1986.
- . *Talkhis al-Muhassal*. Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1985.
- Al-Undulusi, Muhammad. *al-Bahr al-Muhit fi al-Tafsir*. 11 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1999.
- Al-Wahidi, Ali. *Asbab Nuzul al-Qur'an*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990.
- Al-Ya'muri, Muhammad. *Uyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Maghazi wa al-Shama'il wa al-Siyar*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Qalam, 1999.
- Al-Ya'qubi, Ahmad. *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1960.
- Al-Zarkishi, Muhammad. *al-Burhan*. 4 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1957.
- Al-Zarkuli, Khayr al-Din. *al-A'lam*. 8 vols. Vol. 7, Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm al-Mala'in, 1980.
- Alston, William P. "Religion." In *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards, 140-5. London/New York: The Mackmillan Company/the Free Press, 1967.
- Ansari, Muhammad Rida. "Foreword." In *'Uddah al-Usul*, 3-92. Qum: Sitarih, 1997.
- Aslan, Adnan. *Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and Seyyed Hossein Nasr*. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998.
- Augustine, Saint. *The City of God Against the Pagans*. Translated by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Aydin, Mahmut. "Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths: A Muslim View." In *Islam and Inter-Faith Relations*, edited by Lloyd Ridgeon and Perry Schmidt-Leukel, 33-54. London: SCM Press, 2007.
- . "Religious Pluralism: A Challenge for Muslims - A Theological Evaluation." *Journal of Educational Studies* 38, no. 2-3 (2001): 330-52.
- Barbour, Ian G. *Issues in Science and Religion*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972.
- . *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1998.
- Bernhardt, Reinhold. *Christianity without Absolutes*. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1994.
- Cairns, Earle Edwin. *Christianity through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church*. 3 ed. Michigan: Zondervan, 1996.
- Chapman, Geoffrey. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Revised Edition ed. London: Burns/Oates, 2006.
- Chatterjee, Satishchandra, and Dhirendramohan Datta. *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. 3 ed. Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1948.
- Chittick, William C. *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

- Clendenin, Daniel B. *Many Gods, Many Lords: Christianity Encounters World Religions*. Michigan: Baker Books, 1990.
- Corbin, Henry. *History of Islamic Philosophy*. Translated by Liadain Sherrard. London/New York: Kegan Paul International, 2006.
- Coward, Harold. *Pluralism: Challenge to World Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 1985.
- Cupitt, Don. *Sea of Faith*. 3 ed. London: SCM Press, 2003.
- D'Costa, Gavin. *Theology and Religious Pluralism: The Challenge of Other Religions*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Translated by Joseph Ward Swain. 2 ed. London: Allen/Unwin, 1979.
- Eliade, Mircea. "Paul Tillich and the History of Religions." In *The Future of Religions*, edited by Jerald C. Brauer, 31-36. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.
- Fakhkhar Nughani, Vahidih. "Tahlil-i Didgah-i Mulla Sadra dar Mizan-i Ta'thir-i Sidq-i Bavarha-yi Dini dar Nijat-i Insanha." *Hikmat-i Sadra'i*, no. 2 (2014): 77-90.
- Gard, Richard A. *Catholicism*. New Yourk: Gorge Braziller, 1962.
- Gilson, Etienne. *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966.
- . *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*. Translated by A.H.C. Downes. London: Sheed/Ward, 1936.
- Gilson, Étienne. *Elements of Christian Philosophy*. New York: New American Library, 1963.
- . *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1955.
- Goddard, Hugh. *Christians and Muslims from Double Standards to Mutual Understanding*. Surrey: Curzon Press, 1995.
- Goldziher, Ignaz. *al-'Aqidah wa al-Shari'ah fi al-Islam*. Translated by Muhammad Yusuf, Ali Hasan 'Abual Qadir and 'Abdul 'Aziz 'Abdul Haq. 2 ed. Baghdad/Egypt: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadithah/Maktabah al-Muthnna, 1959.
- . *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* [Vorlesungen über den Islam]. Translated by Andras and Ruth Hamori. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Gross, Rita M. "Excuse Me, But What's the Problem? Isn't Religious Pluralism Normal?". In *The Myth of Religious Superiority: Multifaith Explorations of Religious Pluralism*, edited by Paul Knitter, 75-87. New York: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Hamilton, Christopher. *Understanding Philosophy*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thoenes Ltd, 2003.
- Hamilton, Malcolm. *The Sociology of Religion*. 2th ed. London/New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Hardy, Friedhelm. "The Classical Religions of India." In *The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia*, 37-127. London: Routledge, 1990.
- . "Introduction." In *The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia*, 1-9. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Hick, John. *Disputed Questions in the Theology and the Philosophy of Religion*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1993.
- . *The Fifth Dimension: An Explanation of the Spiritual Real*. London: SMC Press, 1999.
- . "Foreword." In *The Meaning and End of Religion*, v-xii. London: Fortress Press, 1991.
- . "Foreword." In *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Reader*, edited by Kenneth Cracknell, viii-ix. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001.
- . *God and the Universe of Faiths*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1973.
- . "Jesus and the World Religions." Chap. 9 In *The Myth of God Incarnate*, edited by John Hick, 167-85. London: SCM Press LTD, 1977.
- . *Philosophy of Religion*. 4 ed. New Jersey/London: Prentice-Hall, 1990.
- . *Problems of Religious Pluralism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985.
- . *The Rainbow of Faiths: Critical Dialogues on Religious Pluralism*. London: SCM Press, 1995.
- . "Religious Pluralism." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, 331-33. New York/London: Macmillan/Collier Macmillan, 1987.
- . "Religious Pluralism and Islam, Lecture Delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, in February 2005." (2013).
- . "Whatever Path Men Choose Is Mine." In *Christianity and other religions : Selected Readings*, edited by John Hick & Brian Hebblethwaite, 171-90. London: Fount Paperbacks, 1980.

- Hofmann, Murad Wilfried. "Religious Pluralism and Islam in a Polarised world." In *Islam and Global Dialogue : Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, edited by Roger Boase, 235-45. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
- Hospers, John. *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*. 4 ed. New York/London: Routledge, 1977.
- Hughes, Edward J. *Wilfred Cantwell Smith: A Theology for the World*. London: SMC Press LTD, 1986.
- Hume, Robert Ernest. *The World's Living Religions : An Historical Sketch with Special Reference to their Sacred Scriptures and in Comparison with Christianity*. Edinburgh: T. & T Clark, 1959.
- Hurr al-'Amili, Muhammad. *Amal al-Amil fi 'Ulama' Jabal 'Amil*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Baghdad: Maktabah al-Undulus, n.d.
- . *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*. 30 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-bayt, 1988.
- . *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*. 30 vols. Vol. 27, Qum: Mu'assasah Al al-bayt, 1988.
- Huseini, Murtada, Zangu'i Ali, Imami Aliashraf, and Javarshikiban 'Abass. "Nisbat-i Nijat va Haqqaniyyat az Nazar-i Mulla Sadra va John Hick." *Falsafi-yi Islami* 12 (2013): 27-46.
- Huseini, Murtada, and Ruhullah Ziynali. "Rastigari-yi Kithratgara va Rabiti-yi an ba Haqqaniyyat az Didgah-i Sadr al-Muta'allihin." *Falsafi-yi Din* 1 (2012): 93-116.
- Huseini Tehrani, Muhammad Husein. *Mir-i Taban*. Mashhad: Nur-i Malakut-i Qur'an, 2004.
- Ibn 'Abd al-Samad, Husein. *Wusul al-Akhbar ila Usul al-Akhbar*. Qum: Majma' al-Dhakha'ir al-Islamiyyah, 1980.
- Ibn al-Ishaq, Muhammad. *al-Siyar wa al-Maghazi*. 5 vols. Vol. 2, Rabat: Ma'had al-Dirasat wa al-Abhath li al-ta'rib, n.d.
- Ibn 'Arabi, Muhy al-Din. *al-Futuh al-Makkiyyah*. 4 vols. Vol. 3, Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1911.
- . *Fusus al-Hikam*. 3 vols. Vol. 1, Cairo: Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah, 1949.
- Ibn Athir, Muhammad. *Usd al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifah al-Sahabah*. 5 vols. Vol. 3, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabi, n.d.
- Ibn Faris, Ahmad. *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*. 6 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Maktab al-'Alam al-Islami, 1983.
- Ibn Hazm, Ali. *al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal*. 5 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Jabal, 1983.
- Ibn Hisham, 'Abd al-Malik. *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1995.
- Ibn Idris, Muhammad. *al-Sar'ir al-Hawiy ila Tahrir al-Fatawi*. 3 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Islamic Publication Institute, 1989.
- Ibn Kathir, Isma'il. *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. 9 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998.
- . *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*. 9 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998.
- Ibn Khaldun, 'Abd al-Rahman. *Tarikh Ibn Khaldun*. 8 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988.
- Ibn Manzur, Muhammad. *Lisan al-'Arab*. 15 vols. Vol. 13, Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1993.
- . *Lisan al-'Arab*. 15 vols. Vol. 8, Beirut: Dar al-Sadir, 1993.
- Ibn Nubakht, Ibrahim. *al-Yaqut fi 'Ilm al-Kalam*. Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1992.
- Ibn Sa'd, Muhammad. *al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*. 8 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990.
- Islami Saravi, Husein. *Mazandaran dar Tarikh*. Sariy: Shilfin, 2011.
- Jaki, Stanley L. "Science and Religion." In *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, 121-33. New York: The Mackmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Jeams, Borland. "Religious Exclusivism." In *Philosophy of Religion*, edited by M. Peterson, W. Hasker, B. Reichenbach and D. Basinger, 496-502. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Jibri'ili, Muhammad Safar. *Siyar-i Tatavvur-i Kalam-i Shi'ah az 'Asr-i Ghiybat ta Khajjah Nasir al-Din-i Tusi*. Qum: Pazhuhishgah-i Farhangi-yi va Andishi-yi Islami, 2010.
- Kamal, Muhammad. *Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy*. Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2006.
- Kempis, Thomas A. *Imitation of Christ*. Translated by Leo Sherley-Price. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958.
- Khalil, Mohammad Hassan. *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation Question*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Khurramshahi, Baha al-Din. "Qur'an va Ilahiyyat-i Jahani." *Bayyinat* 17 (1998): 170-77.
- King, Winston L. "Religion." In *The Encyclopaedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, 282-93. New York: The Mackmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Knitter, Paul F. *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility*. New York: Orbis Books, 1996.

- . "The Meeting of Religions: A Christian Debate." In *Ony One Way?* London: SCM Press, 2011.
- . *One Earth Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue and Global Responsibility*. New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Kraemer, Hendrik. *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*. London: James Clarke/Company LTD, 1961.
- . *Why Christianity of All Religions?* London: Lutterworth Pres, 1962.
- Küng, Hans. *The Catholic Church*. Translated by John Bowden. London: Phoenix Press, 2001.
- . "A Christian Response." Translated by Peter Heinegg. In *Christinaity and the World Religions* 160-81. London: SCE Press LTD, 1993.
- . *Does God Exist?* Translated by Edward Quinn. London: St Janes's Place, 1980.
- . *On Being a Christian*. Translated by Edward Quinn. London: Collins, 1977.
- . "Religion, violence and 'holy wars'." *International Review of the Red Cross* 87, no. 858 (2005): 253-68.
- . *Tracing the Way: Spiritual Dimensions of the World Religions*. Translated by John Bowden. London/New York: Continuum, 2002.
- Lahiji, 'Abad al-Razzaq. *Guhar-i Murad*. Qum: Nashr-i Sayih, n.d.
- Lahiji, 'Abd al-Razzaq. *Shawariq al-Ilham fi Sharh Tajrid al-Kalam*. 5 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2006.
- Legenhausen, Muhammad. *Islam and Religious Pluralism*. Tehran: al-Hoda, 1999.
- . "A Muslim's Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism." Chap. 3 In *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, edited by Roger Boase, 51-73. Surrey/Burlington: Ashgate, 2005.
- Livingston, James C. "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith." *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 4, no. 3 (2003): 58-65.
- Makarim, Nasir. *al-Amthal fi Tafsir Kitab Allah al-Munzal*. 20 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Madrasah al-Imam 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, 2000.
- . *Tafsir-i Nimunih*. 27 vols. Vol. 1, Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1995.
- Mar'i, Husein 'Abdullah. *Muntaha al-Maqal fi 'Il al-Dirayah wa al-Rijal*. Beirut: 'Urwah al-Wuthqa, 1996.
- Ma'rifat, Muhammad Hadi. *al-Tamhid fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an*. 7 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Mu'assasa-yi Farhangi-yi Tamhid, 2007.
- . *Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'an*. Translated by Mansur Limba and Salim Rossier. 2 vols. Vol. 2, Tehran: Samt, 2014.
- . *'Ulum-i Qur'ani*. Qum: Mu'assasa-yi Farhang-i Tamhid, 2001.
- McAuliffe, Jane Dammen. *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern Exegesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- McDermott, Martin J. *The Theology of Shaikh al-Mufid*. Beirut: Dar al-Machreq, 1986.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 6th ed. Chichester: Willy Blackwell, 2017.
- . *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 3th ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001.
- . *Theology: The Basic Readings*. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- Meister, Chad. *Introducing Philosophy of Religion*. London/New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Montesquieu, Baron de. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Translated by Thomas Nugent. 2 vols. Vol. 2, New York: Hafner Press, 1959.
- Mughniyyah, Muhammad Jawad. *al-Shi'ah fi al-Mizan*. Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1979.
- . *al-Tafsir al-Kashif*. 7 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm al-Mala'in, 1981.
- . *al-Tafsir al-Mubin*. Beirut: Mu'assasah 'Izz al-Din, 1983.
- Muhsiniyan Rad, Mahdi. *Hanjarha dar Si Kitab-i Muqaddas: Turat, Injil va Qur'an*. Qum: Intisharat-i Adyan va Madhahib, 2013.
- Muntazir Qa'im, Mahdi. *Jesus through Shi'ite Narrations*. Translated by Muhammad Legenhausen. Qum: Ansariyan, 2004.
- Murtada, Ja'far. *al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabiyy al-A'zam*. 35 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Dar al-Hadith li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 2006.
- . *al-Sahih min Sirat al-Nabiyy al-A'zam*. 35 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Dar al-Hadith li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, 2006.
- Muslim, Abu al-Husein. *Sahih Muslim*. 8 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.
- . *Sahih Muslim*. 8 vols. Vol. 7, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.

- Mustafapur, Muhammad Rida. "Qur'an va Zindiqi-yi Musalimat Amiz-i Piyruvan-i Adyan." *Akhlaq-i Vahyani*, 2012, 149-58.
- Mustafavi, Hasan. *al-Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur'an al-Karim*. 14 vols. Vol. 3, Tehran: Bungah-i Tarjumih va Nashr-i Kitab, 1981.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. *Majmu'i-yi Athar*. 30 vols. Vol. 6, Qum: Sadra, 1993.
- . *Vahy va Nubuvvat*. Qum: Sadra, 1987.
- Muzaffar, Muhammad Rida. *Usul al-Fiqh*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Isma'iliyyah, n.d.
- Najafi, Muhammad Hasan. *Jawahir al-Kalam fi Sharh Sharayi' al-Ahkam*. 43 vols. Vol. 19, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1983.
- Nasr, Hossein. *The Heart of Islam: Enduring the Values for Humanity*. New York: Harper One, 2004.
- . *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and His Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works*. Tehran: Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1978.
- . *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World*. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993.
- Nasri, 'Adullah. *Mabani-yi Risalat-i Anbiya' dar Qur'an*. Tehran: Surush, 1998.
- Nazari Pur, Hamid, Qurban 'Ilmi, and Mujtaba Zarvani. "Barrasi-yi Didgahha-yi Wilfred Cantwell Smith dar Mas'ali-yi Tanavu'-i Dini". *Ilahiyyat-i Tatbigi* 16 (2016): 143-56.
- A New Dictionary of Religions*. Edited by John R. Hinnells Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1955.
- Noss, John B. *Man's Religions*. 7 ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1984.
- O'Grady, Joann. *Early Christian Heresies*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985.
- O'keeffe, Terry. "Religion and Pluralism." In *Philosophy and Pluralism*, edited by David Archard, 61-72. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Omar, Irfan A. "About Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub." In *Islam and Other Religions: Pathways to Dialogue: Essays in honore of Mahmud Mustafa Ayoub*, 193-4. London/New York: Routledge Taylor/Francis Group, 2006.
- . "Biography of Mahmoud Mustafa Ayoub." In *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, edited by Irfan A. Omar, xi-xiii. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.
- Pailin, David A. *Groundwork of Philosophy of Religion*. London: Epworth Press, 1986.
- Peterson, Michael, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger. *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Plantinga, Alvin. "Pluralism: A Defence of Religious Exclusivism." Chap. 8 In *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*, edited by Thomas D. Senior, 191-215. Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Popkin, Richard H., and Avrum Stroll. *Philosophy*. 3 ed. London: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd, 1993.
- Qaysari, Davud. *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*. Tehran: Intisharat-i 'Ilmi va Farhangi, 1996.
- Quinn, Philip L. "Religious Pluralism." In *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward Craig, 260-4. London/New York: Routledge, 1998.
- The Qur'an*. Translated by Aliquli Qara'i. 2 ed. London: ICAS, 2005.
- Qutb, Sayyid. *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. 6 vols. Vol. 1, Beirut/Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1991.
- . *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*. 6 vols. Vol. 2, Beirut/Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1991.
- Race, Alan. *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Patterns in the Christian Theology of Religions*. 2 ed. London: SCM Press, 1983.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses*. London: Cohen&West, 1952.
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. 2 ed. London: Oxford University Press, 1940.
- Rahner, Karl. "Religious Inclusivism." In *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, edited by Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach and David Basinger, 502-13. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Raisanen, Heikki. *Beyond New Testament Theology*. London: SCM Press, 1990.
- Ramakrishna, Sri. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Translated by Swami Nikhilananda. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1957.
- Richards, Glyn. *Towards a Theology of Religions*. London/New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Rippin, Andrew. "Ibn 'Abbas's al-Lughat fi al-Qur'an." In *The Qur'an Formative Interpretation*, edited by Andrew Rippin, 109- 19. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- . "Ibn 'Abbas's Gharib al-Qur'an". In *The Qur'an Formative Interpretation*, edited by Andrew Rippin, 120-21. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.

- Rizvi, Sajjad H. "Oneself as the Saved Other? The Ethics and Soteriology of Difference in Two Muslim Thinkers." In *Between Heaven and Hell: Islam, Salvation, and the Fate of Others*, edited by Mohammad Hassan Khalil, 180-206. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Robertson, Roland. *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1970.
- Rodrigues, Hillary, and John S. Harding. *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. London/New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract and Discourses*. Translated by G. D. H. Cole. London/Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1920.
- Sachedina, 'Abdulaziz. *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Sadr al-Din, Muhammad. *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*. 9 vols. Vol. 5, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1981.
- . *al-Hikmah al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-'Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*. 9 vols. Vol. 7, Beirut: Dar al-Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1981.
- . *al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ad*. Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat-i Iran, n.d.
- . *al-Mazahir al-Ilahiyyah fi Asrar al-'Ulum al-Kamaliyyah*. Tehran: Bunyad-i Hikmat-i Sadra, 1997.
- . *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah fi al-Manahij al-Sulukiyyah*. Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Danishqah, 1981.
- . *Asrar al-Ayat*. Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat, 1981.
- . *Iqaz al-Na'im*. Tehran: Anjuman-i Falsafih va Hikmat-i Iran, 1982.
- . *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*. 4 vols. Vol. 4, Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 2004.
- . *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*. 4 vols. Vol. 1, Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 2004.
- . *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*. 4 vols. Vol. 2, Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Mutali'at va Tahqiqat-i Farhangi, 2004.
- . *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*. 7 vols. Vol. 5, Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987.
- . *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*. 7 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987.
- . *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*. 7 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987.
- . *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Karim*. 7 vols. Vol. 4, Qum: Intisharat-i Bidar, 1987.
- Sarasvati, Swami Dayananda. *Light of Truth*. Translated by Chiranjiva Bhardwaja. 2 ed. Allahabad: Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, 1915.
- Scharf, Betty R. *The Sociological Study of Religion*. London: Hutchinson, 1970.
- Schlette, Heinz Robert. *Towards a Theology of Religions*. London: Burns/Oates LTD, 1966.
- Schmidt-Leukel, Perry. "Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism." In *The Myth of Religious Superiority: Multifaith Explorations of Religious Pluralism*, edited by Paul Knitter, 13-23. New York: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Sen, K.M. *Hinduism*. London/New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Siddiqui, Ataullah. *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1997.
- Sina, Abu Ali. *al-Najat min al-Gharaq fi Bahr al-Dalalah*. Tehran: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Tehran, n.d.
- . *al-Shifa: al-Ilahiyyat*. Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, n.d.
- . *Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyin*. Qum: Maktabah al-Mar'ashi al-Najafi, 1984.
- Smart, Ninian. "Hinduism." In *A companion to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Charles Taliaferro and Philip L. Quinn, 7-14. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- . "Truth and Religions." In *Truth and Dialogue: The Relation Between World Religions*, edited by John Hick, 45-58. London: Sheldom Press, 1974.
- . *The World's Religions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. "The Christian in a Religiously Plural World." In *Christianity and Other Religions: Selected Readings*, edited by John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, 44-58. Oxford: Oneworld, 2001.
- . *Faith and Belief*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- . *The Faith of Other Men*. New York/London: Harper Torchbook, 1963.
- . *Islam in Modern History*. Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957.
- . *The Meaning and End of Religion*. London: Fortress Press, 1991.
- . *Questions of Religious Truth*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.

- . *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*. London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1981.
- Sobhani, Ja'far. *al-Ilahiyyat ila Huda al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah wa al-'Aql*. 4 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2009.
- . *Doctrine of Shi'i Islam: A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices*. Translated by Reza Shah-Kazami. London/New York: I.B.Tauris Publishers, 2001.
- . *Furugh-i Abadiyyat*. Qum: Bustan-i Kitab, 2004.
- . *'Ilm al-Dirayah*. Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1993.
- . *Madkhal-i Masa'il-i Jadid dar 'Ilm-i Kalam*. 3 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1996.
- . *Madkhal-i Masa'il-i Jadid dar 'Ilm-i Kalam*. 3 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2000.
- . *Mafahim al-Qur'an*. 14 vols. Vol. 7, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2004.
- . *Mafahim al-Qur'an*. 14 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1993.
- . *Mafahim al-Qur'an*. 14 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1993.
- . *Manshur-i Jawid*. 12 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1994.
- . *Manshur-i Jawid*. 12 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2004.
- . *Mawsu'ah Tabaqat al-Fuqaha*. 15 vols. Vol. 13, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1997.
- . *Mu'jam al-Tabaqat al-Mutakallimin*. 5 vols. Vol. 2, Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2002.
- . *Safahat min al-Hayat*. Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 2009.
- . *Tadhkirah al-A'yan*. Qum: Mu'assasah al-Imam al-Sadiq, 1997.
- Spiro, Melford E. "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation." In *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Banton, 85-125. London: Tavistock Publications, 1966.
- Stark, Rodney. "Economics of Religion." In *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, edited by Robert A. Segal, 46-67. Oxford/malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Stead, Christopher. *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Suroush, 'Abdulkarim. *Siratha-yi Mustaqim*. Tehran: Sirat, 2005.
- Swidler, Leonard. "A Dialogue on Dialogue." In *Death or Dialogue? From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue*. London: SMC Press, 1990.
- . "Interreligious and Interideological Dialogue: The Matrix for All Systematic Reflection Today." In *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, edited by Leonard Swidler, 6-47. Marknoll: Orbis Books, 1987.
- Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husein. *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 10: Qum, 1966.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 1, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 6, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 3, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1995.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 5, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 12, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 18, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. 20 vols. Vol. 4, Qum: Daftar-i Intisharat-i Islami, 1996.
- . *Qur'an dar Islam*. Qum: Bustan-i Kitab, 2009.
- Taliaferro, Charles. *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998.
- Tehrani, Aqa Buzurg. *al-Dhari'ah ila Tasanif al-Shi'ah*. 26 vols. Vol. 4, Beirut: Dar al-Adwa, 1983.
- . "Foreword." In *al-Tibyan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, edited by Ahmad Habib Qasir, 1-74. Beirut: Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1988.
- Thiessen, Henry C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Michigan: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979.
- Tillich, Paul. *Christianity and the Encounter of the Word Religions*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.
- Tiwari, Kedar Nath. *Comparative Religion*. 2 ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2014.
- Toynbee, Arnold. *Christianity among the Religions of the World*. New York: Charls Scribner's Sons, 1955.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. 2 vols. Vol. 1, London: John Murray, 1871.

- Unterman, Alan. *The Jews: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London/New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Vatican Council II the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents. New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975.
- Wach, Joachim. *Sociology of Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Wainwright, William J. "Christianity." In *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Charles Taliaferro and Philip L. Quinn, 56-63. Oxford/Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.
- . *Philosophy of Religion*. 2 ed. London: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999.
- Ward, Keith. "Religion and the Question of Meaning." In *The Meaning of the Life in the World Religions*, edited by Josef Runzo and Nancy M. Martin, 11-30. Oxford: Oneworld, 2000.
- Watt, William Montgomery. *Muslim-Christian Encounters*. London/New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . *Religious Truth for Our Time*. Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 1995.
- Weightman, Simon. "Hinduism." In *A New Handbook of Living Religions*, edited by John R. Hinnells, 261-309. London: Penguin Books, 1998.
- Willaime, Jean-Paul. *Jami 'Shinasi-i Din (Sociologie Des Religions)*. Translated by 'Abdurrahim Gawahi. Tehran: Tibyan, 1997.
- Wolfson, Harry Austryn. *The Philosophy of the Kalam*. Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Yandell, Keith E. *Philosophy of Religion*. London/New York: Eoutledge, 1999.
- Yinger, John Milton. *The Scientific Study of Religion*. London: Macmillan, 1970.
- Yusuf Ali, 'Abdullah. *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary*. Maryland: Amana Corp, 1983.
- Zamakhshari, Mahmud. *al-Kashshaf*. 4 vols. Vol. 3, Egypt: Mustafa al-Bani, 1966.
- Ziai, Hossein. "Mulla Sadra: His Life and Works." In *History of Islamic Philosophy*, edited by Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, 635- 42. London/New York: Routledge, 1996.